University of Alberta

Design Recommendations for an Outdoor Public Space in Downtown Edmonton, Alberta

by

Aušra Burns

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design

in

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Design Recommendations for an Outdoor Public Space in Downtown Edmonton, Alberta, submitted by Aušra Burns in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design.

in Industrial Design.

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Abstract

This Master of Design thesis addresses urban design issues and design methods issues while proposing design transformations for a particular public space. These two themes are developed and presented in the form of a case study. The object of the study is a public park space redevelopment in the downtown area of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, toward more extensive and satisfactory public use.

The introduction of the thesis paper focuses on broad urban social trends which in part shape the particular conditions and problems of the site. Design criteria are presented relating the broader urban design context to this specific site. Research findings which identified directions for design changes are presented in the main body of the thesis. This information was gathered through ethnographic interviews, site observations and comparisons with related studies. Design recommendations for this site are communicated in the closing chapters of the paper.

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Introduction

Analysis of a context in which the opportunities for a design intervention arise; defining the concept "new urban district"

In this thesis I will develop a design proposition for a public park site in downtown Edmonton, Alberta. The core of the thesis is a case study. Its findings will be an important contributing factor in relating the particular local context to the wider urban North American context: the lives and forms of these cities. The study's applied methods will be reviewed and evaluated as the connections between the design criteria for this park and the broader design context are established.

The physical, social and economic variables associated with both contexts are in flux. My proposition should reflect an acknowledgement of this fact. My analysis of public space design issues will take into account the broader influences of socio-economic systems that are at play in the urban environment. To understand these dynamics in Edmonton, I will refer to the city's economic and political role as a subsystem of the larger North American context.

This case study is particular to the city of Edmonton. Edmonton can be considered a mid-sized North American city. The expansion of the oil industries during the 1960's and 1970's fashioned its area and its population growth pattern most notably. The pattern of economic and spatial growth of this provincial centre define the city as a "new urban district." Though more isolated, and smaller in size and possibly global economic impact, Edmonton shares many socio-economic characteristics of such cities as Los Angeles or centres within Orange County, California's Silicon Valley.

North American "new urban districts" as representations of a certain form of economic reality and a "new spatial order."

The concept "new urban district" infers the certain socio-economic and spatial organization of the new cities of the twentieth century. New urban districts exist in their most advanced form in the United States and Canada, and can also be identified within established and newly emerging power centres of Europe and Asia. The economic, social and technological forces that have created them can be seen worldwide. In the form and appearance of these urban centres, they are particular manifestations of a relatively unrestricted free market economy, and have subsequently become carriers of a "new spatial order." Unlike all cities of the past, this new spatial representation does not include a clearly defined centre, periphery or hinterland, nor are its manufacturing and commercial districts consolidated. The role of the city core as the centre of power is reduced. Instead, urban functions are spread along the highway "growth corridors." These low-density settlements are characterized by urban, suburban and rural elements arranged in a seemingly random, endless collage.

New urban districts, nevertheless, often co-exist with traditional urban centres. The process of amalgamation is driven by an interplay of social, political, economic and spatial forces. For example, the city of Amsterdam continues to maintain a traditional physical and cultural centre. The centre's function is changing; it is redefining itself and evolving over time. Tourism and commercial activity are now ubiquitous in the historic downtown area. It remains to be seen how sustainable the processes are socially, economically and environmentally. The traditional centre now stands juxtaposed with the newer living, commerce and industry regions of the city, where much of the economic and political power is now concentrated.

The decline in heavy industry and the emergence of the economy of post-Fordist technology, has brought a "series of flexible manufacturing and service complexes" to these new urban districts that are "no longer bound by rigid hierarchical demands of mass production and assembly lines." These changes have shaped a "manufactured landscape of flexible economic specialization." (Soja: 97) Describing similar processes underway in Silicon Valley, Langdon Winner notes that "a new way of life, a new variety of social organization is taking shape." (Winner: 44) This new urban landscape is not the product of a specific design idea. Rather, economic infrastructural principles dominate its design process. According to Martin Pawley, "this new urbanism of the trade routes . . . was ignored by critics of architecture and urban planners. Yet in economic terms it is already more important than the sum of all the 'Fine Arts' architecture built in our ancient towns and cities over the last half century. It has taken warehousing, distribution and retailing out of the cities altogether." (Pawley: 52)

While these cities display many similar characteristics, they have individual differences. A city's population and area; geographic location (ie: whether the city is a port, or is landlocked); the social and ethnic demographics; and the time line of development are all factors that contribute to a city's role and identity. Edmonton can be, therefore, more specifically categorized with other new urban districts that are mid-sized cities on the North American scale, are located far from major ports, transportation hubs and financial centres, and whose growth surged in the middle decades of the Twentieth century. Evident features include both a coagulation of the downtown and significant sprawl in the periphery.

Seeking a broader definition of "new urban districts" helps create a reference point. The definition may capture a phase in the development of these cities, but must be understood in the context of change. An understanding of the current and specific situation will nevertheless serve in determining and isolating critical economic and social realities which must be addressed when a design action is to take place within the system or city.

The presence and consequence of "new urban districts'" development on urban life in terms of physical, social and psychological impact

For my purposes, I aim to reveal the fact and consequences of "new urban district" development on urban life in terms of physical, social and psychological impact. The effects of this development have been great enough to shake most of our traditional perceptions of the city as a home place - an anchored, unique geographical space, a truly physical space where we live, work and rest, where we interact, confront and consolidate.

Describing the contemporary phenomena of the modern city in Variations on a Theme Park, Michael Sorkin suggests that traditionally perceived urban space no longer matters due to processes of globalization, information economy, and telematics. (Sassen: 71) In describing changes to life in cites such as Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York he notes, "Computers, credit cards, phones, faxes, and other instruments of instant artificial adjacency are rapidly eviscerating historic politics of propinquity, the very cement of the city." He continues, "recent years have seen the emergence of a wholly new kind of city, a city without a place attached to it." Sorkin describes these characteristics of ageographic urban development as visible through physical features such as "dumps of skyscrapers . . . huge shopping malls . . . surrounded by swarms of cars" (Sorkin: xi), as well as the "artificial arms" and "plastic tubes" of underground and overhead pedways.

Sorkin remarks that what such a city is missing "is not a matter of any particular building or place; it's the spaces in between, the connections that make sense of forms." He sees that the emergence of a "universal particular, generic urbanism" (Sorkin: xiii) challenges the very basis of traditional form-making which has relied on the physical juxtaposition of elements in space - the fundamental questions of "what goes with what" and "what yields to what." (Sorkin: xii)

Other significant characteristics marking such cities are its obsessions with "security," with raising levels of manipulation and surveillance of its citizenry, and with a proliferation of new modes of segregation. The methods are both technological and physical. Corporate culture inscribes itself in a "neutralized space of precision" which is supposedly

"ordered by technology and efficiency." This inscription is only a "partial representation of city and of economy." (Sassen: 72) It stands in contrast to what we think of as the culture of small businesses and ethnic enterprises: a culture of people who hold low-wage, nonprofessional jobs. This latter social group lacks appropriate physical representation in the spaces of the city. "The space of the amalgamated other . . . is constituted as a devalued, downgraded space in the dominant economic narrative: social and physical decay, a burden." (Sassen: 82) The emergence of "safe," interiorized, supervised "metered" spaces is occurring throughout new urban districts. It extends from the workplace to the shopping mall to the gated homogeneous communities. Persons en route to a destination want only to arrive, not a journey. The car or the surveillance-laden pedway seems the best means to that end. This leaves the traditional street sparsely occupied and those on the street feeling vulnerable and exposed.

Sorkin describes the city as a new realm of simulations, a television city, the city as a theme park. In contemporary cities of the developed world, and especially those in North America, "the 'historic' has become the "only complicit official urban value." (Sorkin: xiv) The result is that the preservation of the physical remnants of the historical city has superseded attention to the human ecologies which produced and inhabited the city. Sorkin calls this an "urban renewal with a sinister twist . . . an architecture of deception which, in its happy-face familiarity" constantly distances itself from the diverse and contradictory urban realities. (Sorkin: xiv) Trevor Boddy has analysed the phenomena of emerging pedway and skyway systems which have replaced many conventional streets across the North American continent. The physical results of this "renewal" are described by Boddy as commodified and anaesthetized "value-free extensions of the existing urban realm" which replace remaining vestiges of public life with "an analogue, a surrogate." (Boddy: 125)

The process of compartmentalisation and segregation: its spatial manifestations and its role in the decline or disappearance of outdoor public life

Both the urban form and the society that inhabit it embody these complex and powerful processes. They change spatial and lifestyle patterns and redefine and reinscribe public life. Often enough there are even changes to the availability and accessibility of traditional low-key and low-tech socialization.

Outdoor public life is undergoing dramatic change. It certainly is in decline. One question worth raising is: to what degree is this decline a natural consequence of our changing lifestyles? And: how much outdoor public life needs to be retained or reinscribed to our traditional urban spaces, to support a humane atmosphere of "civitas" as we enter the 21st century?

It is important to address the influence on social life of the new urban reality that, E. W. Soja notes in describing places like Orange County, California, has "increasing influence over embodied, spatially bound varieties of social life." "Something new is being born here, something that slips free of our old categories and stereotypes, resists conventional modes of explanation, and befuddles long established strategies for political reaction." (Soja: 101) This "new" ethereal reality infers that knowing where a person, building, neighbourhood, town or city is located no longer provides a reliable guide to understanding human relationships and institutions. Public space as an urban space is shifting its territory. It is now found within our private, segregated and specialized enclaves of activity largely as media culture. Privatized, "metered" space represents a fortress, a filter, a refuge, and stands in contrast to the frequently abandoned, criminalized metropolitan street. There is a glaring absence of the more spontaneous intermingling of classes and races associated with city "street life."

It would nevertheless be a mistake to assume that the only way to protect and preserve the social treasures of our cities is to turn away from the processes of change and seek the refuge inferred in a "back to basics" or "back to nature" approach. Rather, according to Soja, we could attempt to capture our "critical ability to see the

spatiality of social life as inherently and instrumentally political. We may then be able to take apart those deceptively embracing simulations and reconstruct a different cartography of power than the one now being mapped out." (Soja: 122) Perhaps there would appear spaces on that map for different activities, for cultural diversity, and for "amalgamated others" (members of the society who do not have adequate representation in our physical urban environments). The culture of these people is as much a part of the process of urban globalization as is the dominating culture of corporate efficiency. One could argue that the disadvantaged people in our society are the most dependent on their immediate urban surroundings. Yet they have few options when it comes to choosing where to live, work or play. They are quietly excluded from what now passes as the public domain.

The play of ideologies in the urban form is indeed complex; buildings seem frozen in time. Buildings and spaces can however be "reinscribed" in different ways to recover the fact that they are places for work and socialization for a larger, non-corporate part of the population. This reinscription is necessary if we are to open our cities to a "complete and representative citizenry - even to those who threaten . . . or cannot or choose not to consume." (Boddy: 153) According to Trevor Boddy, the reinscription of public life can take place in open urban areas, but there also remains the possibility of allowing the wider citizenry to enter more freely our interiorized, secluded spaces. (Boddy: 153)

Many manifestations of the processes of compartmentalisation and segregation are characteristic of Edmonton. Evidence of these processes are found in the west-end and south-side networks of strip malls, megastores, flashy billboards, and fenced or gated residential neighbourhoods. As Edmonton's processes and features are typical of new urban districts, reference to broader urban trends is therefore relevant to the object of my case study.

Assumptions

Social interaction is a public good

Much of my inspiration to engage in an intellectual inquiry in this topic lies in my personal belief, and fundamental assumption, that everyday social contact between people in our cities is integral to a feeling of belonging to society, belonging to the place of living. Our built environment is constantly transforming, modifying the character and patterns of social interaction. Some of this change in interaction is blocked from common sight; some manifests itself in new, unfamiliar or unconventional ways (it may even be intimidating and frightening to some people). Some interaction is dying out or slowly disappearing because of social or physical barriers, or simply due to changes in our life patterns.

Nevertheless, human social contact exists and thrives at various levels of intensity, and in many places. "We socialize in the privacy of our homes, where everything from water and electricity to news, mail, advertising, and even computer-based work is piped in to us. For that very reason," Clare Cooper Marcus and Carolyn Francis state that, "many people yearn for a public life, albeit perhaps only in a brief downtown lunch hour. The office district plaza is certainly not the hub of city life that the piazza once was, but does that make it any less important to contemporary life?" (Cooper Marcus: 1) The fact that such sites function differently does not necessarily imply a drop in need or quality. Rather, it perhaps implies that we need to consciously and continuously reassess socio-physical situations occurring in our cities, and modify our ways to design *people-places.*

Social interaction in outdoor public spaces is an important alternative to the commodified, segregated urban realm

Open city spaces such as streets, plazas, back alleys and parks are all vital components of a healthy and sustainable urban public realm. In the case of Edmonton's

downtown area, the public outdoor places can continue to serve as viable alternatives to semi-private, air conditioned indoor malls and pedways. Edmonton is a winter city that depends on many of its activities, including social ones, being carried on indoors and accessed predominantly by car. There are cases when this is convenient and economically viable. Nevertheless, the city has sufficient social conditions, and physical qualities such as good public spaces outside the buildings, to provide city dwellers with opportunities to meet each other, relax, and enjoy the outdoors.

Concerns of people who would benefit most from having a park, or just a safe place to "hang out" and watch others, are not always at the forefront of political agendas, various city master plans or found in the newspaper headlines. These people are seniors and teens, the homeless and transients, or often low and middle rank office female employees and young people working in retail and service industries.

A downtown park is, or can be, valuable not only because of some individuals' need or inability to afford better, more expensive alternatives. Such public spaces represent a valuable resource: places for human contact with the real physical, *natural environment*. As such, they can help us strike a critical balance in our lives. According to Michael Hough, "the quality of life implies, among other things, being able to choose between one place and another, between one lifestyle and another. It implies interest, pleasure, stimulated senses and varied landscapes. The city that has places for foxes and owls, natural woodlands, trout lilies, marshes and fields and urban wilderness, is more interesting and pleasant to live in than one that does not have these places. The city also needs hard urban places, busy plazas and markets, noisy as well as quiet places, playing fields and formal gardens." (Hough: 23)

Meaningful design interventions can contribute to the reinscription of public life in urban open spaces

The interplay of socio-economic processes and the physical urban form is a process which encompasses the very essence of our contemporary existence: the political,

economic, social and cultural realities - its players and the stage itself. It would be unreasonable to state that a designer can singlehandedly solve a social crisis or radically turn the wheel of history in the "right" direction, no matter how much power he or she has in decision making, or how good their intentions. One concerned with urban design issues should recognize the limitations of design modifications in social healing. On the other hand, meaningful, time and place sensitive design interventions can create or encourage a positive shift in the use of a designed product or environment, and in levels of satisfaction in, and reflection on, the object of the design. In a given area of a town, people are going to enjoy, and come back to, places which are convenient, aesthetically appealing, safe, and provide necessary amenities for carrying on common activities.

The realization of a design is, of course, dependent on many factors. Designers who are competent, who are intelligent in interpreting the design's context, who understand how their own decisions are made and how other people make decisions, have a better chance of realizing their designs. Defining the limitations of the urban design act in turn allows for the identification of the potential impact of creative efforts, and consequently the responsibility for the cultural impact on people, society in general, and the ecosystem. The design act carried out in our contemporary city holds a real potential to serve the public in the altruistic sense when it is also economically feasible and sustainable in a given socio-physical situation. Striking a balance between understanding the limitations, and carefully assessing the possible impact, is central to my understanding of *meaningful design intervention*.

The term *design intervention*, as it is used in my thesis work, implies design action of creative interference in existing patterns of life and the physical environment. Design intervening has as its goal focussed modification of particular connections existing in the socio-physical environment. The goal is to facilitate the flow of information and communication, and the processes of cohabitation between people, people and the environment, and the environment and objects, making them more efficient, effective, relevant to a variety of human needs, and sustainable.

In approaching the design activity concerned with outdoor public space planning or urban infill developments in the North American context, I assume that the effectiveness of the task, and the degree to which creative success will be achieved, are rooted in a modification of modes of operation (methods and approaches to work) which I will discuss in later chapters.

Chapter 1

1.1 Presentation of the object for the case study

1.1.1 the design of public spaces within North American 'new urban districts' with specific reference to the city of Edmonton

When one takes into account the current complexity of urban processes, a redefinition of the design action for public environments becomes an imperative. The question of *what* to design is inextricably linked to an understanding of *how* to design. These questions in turn hinge on the goal itself: making a responsive, reflective and meaningful contribution to the ever changing metropolitan reality. My thesis will, therefore, focus much on redefining the nature of the design intervention in a public space.

In the thesis I will develop a design proposition for a familiar, characteristic site in the city of Edmonton. Objectively, the city has certain qualities and features which make it a good place for such an urban design intervention. Subjectively, I have a vested interest in Edmonton: this is the city in which I live, a city which I experience every day through meeting its residents and seeing its places. It is also the site from which I connect to the rest of the world through global communication networks. Approaching this thesis as a case study, but on a familiar public site, I will aim to contribute a design proposition noteworthy to colleagues involved in urban issues, as well as to local citizens and officials.

Edmonton is a provincial capital with a population approaching one million. It is situated at 53.35° north latitude in a region which has a cold temperate climate. The coldest time of the year, and the period with the least sunshine - 100 hours or less per month - occurs between November and January. The city's growth pattern and sprawl reveal a clear preference for building along traffic arteries. The downtown is characterized by corporate high-rises and an extensive network of overhead and underground pedways. The central core is losing its role as the public centre, as a place of gathering, activity and connection. Apart from several organized summer festivals (including Klondike Days, the Works, and A Taste of Edmonton), Edmonton's downtown places "in between" are only buzzing with activity during lunch and business hours. While we are aware of the local residents' famed "Western hospitality," the scarcity of people on public sites downtown makes these places inadequate for experiencing this appealing feature of the city.

1.1.2 the design of a downtown park in Edmonton (SE corner of Jasper Avenue and 102 Street)

The site I have chosen for my case study is now called a "temporary park," and is located on the southeast corner of the intersection of Jasper Avenue and 102 Street. (see Illustration 1) The site itself is the property of the Royal Bank of Canada. The bank's officials agreed to keep it as a green space after a building on the site was demolished. This park (known to a few as "Glen Abbey Park") is situated along a historically thriving main street. Though Jasper Avenue remains identified as the "main street" of downtown, it does not currently function as such. According to Edmonton's Planning and Development Department, "Assets of the area include the existing human scale of development, currently low property values and rents which render the area affordable for small businesses." (Downtown Planning Group, Edmonton: 1) This description poignantly reflects the state of this area. Hit by an economic slowdown and company downsizing, the area lost not only much of its social appeal, but also experienced

significant reductions in real estate values. "There is now enough downtown office space for 28 years at current absorption rates, before the vacancy rate drops below 5 per cent, the city says." (MacDonald: D2) The downtown area around Jasper Avenue has been "milked" for some time now, and seems ripe for a wave of gentrification.

The processes of gentrification, and the displacements associated with it, are typical of new urban districts. They *can* bring "cultural revitalization" to an area. However, the process often remains ruled by real estate profit concerns. The focus is not on improving social interaction in the area. Addressing social concerns would require the involvement of local residents and users, and a reevaluation of broader visions for the site and surroundings.

The small park in question is truly a place "in between," both physically, and, in terms of the economic climate changes, historically. The heady times of the past oil-booms which transformed the area are fading from memory, and the future seems uncertain. Nevertheless, this park is enjoyed by many people who work in the area, and by some who just pass through or visit occasionally. It is a popular summer lunch area. One has only to visit the site on a comfortable spring or summer day to experience the phenomena of pleasant solitary relaxation and cozy social gathering which occur. The bare walls of the parkade and the hundreds of high-rise window "eyes" looking at the park surprisingly do not make visitors feel intimidated here. The sunshine, and the shade or shelter provided by the trees might have to do a lot with this. Sparks of activity can be seen here during peak hours. The three picnic tables on the site are used frequently in warm weather for lunching, reading or chatting; in cooler seasons as benches while people wait for buses. The park's current use, prime location and considerable greenery give it much potential as the object of a design action. (see Illustrations 1b-e and Appendix 1: 13 for detailed description of the site)

1. 2 Discussion of objectives

To increase the quality of life for users through facilitation of social interaction and the enjoyment of an open space

The concept of quality of life is a very broad concept demanding constant reevaluation. It encompasses the very essence of what our lives are about, what we believe in, and what we attempt to achieve or ameliorate during our life's journey. This design project, the related research, and further evaluation of gained knowledge are concerned with a particular aspect of our lives and the qualities inherent in it: fulfilling one's need to be with others, enjoying the actual processes of belonging - in a physical place, and to the action occurring. It is just one aspect of our lives, but to my mind it has a direct influence on our personal integrity, our self-fulfilment as members of society - belonging to the place we live as social beings. In our age of speed and technology, these kinds of places represent "slow time spaces," where one has a chance for "down to earth" reflection, and where all can afford to spend such times.

1.2.1 primary mean: design recommendations for an outdoor public space in Edmonton

This downtown park at Jasper Avenue and 102 Street represents a very suitable object for design recommendations, as an opportunity exists to both apply focused transformations to current physical features, and create further opportunities for social interaction. In terms of potential for effective physical, psychological and social change, the site's advantages far outnumber its drawbacks and limitations. The proposed design intervention will have as an objective the creation of a humanized landscape which "fits in," but also represents something special and meaningful to people.

1.2.2 evaluation of gained knowledge in terms of its relevance to the broader urban design context

Improvements to this public space should integrate with factors of the time and space of the place, and enrich the city of Edmonton. The park's redesigning could become a timely contribution to the aesthetic qualities and physical environment of the downtown area, and improve the social microclimate. To some city residents the park might simply be a more pleasant sight to view through the car window; to others it might become a place to kick off one's shoes and rest tired feet, or a place to write one's first poem. Is there a place and a wish in our hearts to create and care for such a public site(s) in Edmonton? I believe so. It is precisely because it is so different from what we now recognize as typical in our urban "establishment" that we value such places. New manifestations of globalization and centralization which result in spatial and social segregation, the separation of people and places of traditional communal living - as well as a growing reliance on speed and electronic control - have created a void in the spectrum of urban living experiences for many residents. Changes should amount to more than just "facelifts" for Edmonton's downtown area, they should reward the spirits of those who continue, or start again, to spend time in the centre. I believe that designers have a challenging but exceptional opportunity to become involved in, and embrace, the self-organization processes and spontaneous cultural forces which mold the contemporary urban form.

Throughout the design process, the validity and reliability of initial assumptions should be questioned by evaluating the knowledge gained in the case study in terms of its relevance to the broader urban design context. Substantiated generalizations, and specific findings achieved by qualified observation and evaluation, can lead to an understanding of more complicated processes in our contemporary society. These processes, and urban design itself, are mutually influential. According to R. F. Ellen, "the selection of the particular situation for analysis is therefore a crucial tactical consideration for analytical purposes. Clearly the analyst chooses a situation precisely because it exhibits the

'morphology of the social structure.' There is thus a duality between the analysis on the one hand and the situation selected to support the analysis on the other." (Ellen: 238)

1.2.3 methodological objective: development and evaluation of design methods applied

Along with the implications of a particular design act on the broader urban context, the methods of work applied and developed in the project can potentially lead to a better understanding of the effectiveness of various modes of operation within the urban design context. Admittedly, it is difficult to speculate on how extensively the methods applied in this particular case study could be successfully projected on other, or broader, creative tasks. Nevertheless, the possibilities, opportunities and obstacles uncovered are worth communicating and contributing. To create points of reference for the broader urban context - disciplinary and interdisciplinary methods of operation - careful analysis and evaluation of a local design action and its particular methods is necessary.

Chapter 2

2 Discussion of the methods chosen to conduct the case study

2.1 Methodological objectives

The case study is an effective and appropriate form of research to undertake when one wishes to understand the socio-economic situation of a site, and make it a model for design action. Preceding this proposed design intervention, the basic analysis of the socio-physical situation of this site involves: qualitative research conducted through site observation, ethnographic interviews with site users and people working near by, and analysis of similar cases - public sites and situations approached in related urban design

studies. In complex urban realities, the designer who endeavours to change something for the better, besides design itself, cannot rely solely on traditional modes of criticism or the self-inscription of a designer as a fine artist or social engineer. I will approach my design proposition in such a way as I may evaluate and revise its method(s) in the working process. A method which will support my goals will contribute to creating a public environment which *is*, rather than just *appears to be*, offering a meaningful transformation and a clearer representation of the design intentions. A further advantage of carefully conducted and well-presented case studies in various fields of social sciences (including a number of design transformation case studies), is the possibility that the accounts' recorded information may be reanalysed by others. Study of the findings may prove useful in other case work, in reaffirming or deepening understanding of the points made, or in constructing alternative interpretations.

2.1.1 public space design as the design, planning and self-organization of a process

I expect my working method to reflect my belief that public space is a space of action and movement, a space that can contain various, often contradictory, processes. The main focus of the design intervention would become the prediction, facilitation and management of the activities occurring on the site. This stands in marked contrast to approaches centring on "object creation." Themes established by looking at the place, the type of activities occurring, the timing of actions of the users, and perceptions of the users will be explored as sources of valuable information. These factors form a complex web. Understanding the themes will be critical in the creation of a valuable design proposition.

2.1.2 subordination of the design of physical objects in a public space to an understanding of social contexts and human interaction in public spaces

I intend to subordinate the design of physical objects in this public space to an understanding of social contexts and human interactions that can take place on this site.

A critical assessment and contextual understanding of the forces shaping people's attitudes and actions in this socio-economic situation would include both local and global variables. It has become increasingly clear that our culture is not homogeneous, that people who live in modern, complex societies actually live by many different cultural codes. Not only is this true of the most clearly defined ethnic groups, but of age and occupation groups.

Fieldwork for this thesis will include a disciplined study of some of the local and world views of people who have learned to see, hear, speak, think, and act in differing ways - ways that are conditioned by particular social settings. I aim to apply all gained knowledge, rather than only studies of people's actions and cognitions. I will aim to interpret findings by drawing on my related knowledge and experience. As a part of my research methods, I have chosen an interdisciplinary inquiry into economic, social and environmental processes toward revealing related urban trends that might otherwise be overlooked in casual observation and speculation. Much of my research will be accomplished before proposing spatial arrangements and infrastructure requirements for the site. Researching these external influences will better enable me to design an appropriate environment - an environment that people understand, relate to, and use with competence and individual responsibility.

2.1.3 a design process characterized by the inclusion of users in the development of design recommendations

Another important methodological consideration is the inclusion of the site's users in the development of the design intervention. In order to accomplish this, I will carefully analyse and observe the environment, and consult persons affected most directly by the site. Users will "participate" in two ways: observations and interpretations of the actions and behaviour of people using the site will be recorded, and interviews with many individuals will be conducted.

The goal of this methodological approach is to obtain two kinds of qualitative information. Observations based on the site-specific behaviour of people in this public

space are a source of candid information, relatively free of users' own interpretations. Observations, to be of value, must lead to insight: remarking on apparently insignificant points, making of connections, and discovering what Henry James, in 1962, called "the figure in the carpet." (Ellen: 220) The second kind of qualitative data will be acquired through personal interviews which should reveal, in many cases, culturally conditioned or "biased" reflections and thoughts about the place. These conversations are instrumental, "first for stripping the ballast of expectation and assumption which we take with us from our own cultures into our fieldwork; and secondly, for consolidating the understanding which we progressively acquire through greater acquaintance with the field." (Ellen: 226) In this way, "the standpoint of the external observer is deconstructed. Research is understood in terms of socio-cultural intervention." (Sheifer: 150) The intervention itself causes new questions to flow and "cultivates pluralistic powers of judgement in design." (Meurer: 35) In many ways this kind of work introduces a new and potentially "unsettling" element to my working routine. Conducting my own investigation, tailored to this project, has a great value personally, and in terms of broadening my understanding of the design methods context.

2.1.4 definition of the relationship (and degree of impact) between the personal ethical position of a designer and the design process itself

The nature of the dialectic between professional and public interest is of great consequence in the urban design context. As Sue McGlynn states, the ability of the designer to make "clear explanations of design intentions and proposals must be an essential part of urban design practice as argumentation is one of the few means by which we gain influence in the development process." (McGlynn: 7) By explaining our intentions we can articulate the relationship between our personal ethical position as designers, and the design process itself. The urban design practice is a creative process that can result in representations, forms and imagery, and have a profound influence on the quality of life for users. While public consensus can exert considerable pressure, it does

not undermine an individual's ability to be creative in the design process. Effectively using their creativity, "designers must realize that they work within limits imposed by their own cultural and psychological makeup, limits that will always inhibit their ability to see their own work from the user's point of view. If properly understood, this should lead to a degree of humility which will in the end make better designers." (Sless: 2) The urban design activity balances the subjective and the objective, the image and the function, and passive reflection with active intervention in real space and time. These balances and connections have to be made and explained.

I will explore these methodological considerations and approaches, to differing degrees, in this thesis. They will be evaluated as they relate to the design proposition for this public park on Jasper Avenue. I expect that the chosen methods will contribute to my making more informed design decisions.

2.2 Description of the methods applied in the analysis of the socio-physical situation before the design intervention

The qualitative research methods applied in this case study are similar to those commonly used by anthropologists in strategic ethnographic research. The fieldwork stage of research which precedes the design intervention includes site and participant observation, and ethnographic interviews. The data is later analysed and interpreted in relation to accumulated information found in similar case studies presented in design literature. Strategic research in anthropology "begins with an interest in human problems. These problems suggest changes and information needed to make such changes." (Spradley: 18) Assuming specific requirements for the design intervention demand an understanding of the social issues of a particular social and physical setting, I will "borrow" research methods from the social sciences to facilitate the interpretation of the actions of those using or being affected by the park. Design interventions undertaken with such an understanding will be more likely to contribute positively to the quality of life.

Research conducted by social scientists is not always applied to the creation of focussed design interventions, physical changes to the environment, management of resulting changes, or the consequences and interpretations of these changes. Knowledge accumulated by anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists and many other experts is of immense value to design research. Still, the specific interpretation of that knowledge is integral to research such as the kind I am engaged in. In my case study I have applied, and evaluated to some extent, these qualitative research methods. The possibilities of these methods' applicability, as regards my current research, will be discussed in the closing chapter.

The ethnographic research cycle involves: definition of a research problem, formulation of hypotheses, generation of operational definitions, design of a research instrument, gathering of data, analysis of data, development of conclusions and finally, the report of results. I have supplemented these stages of research in my case study by generation of the design intervention's constraints and potentials, propositions of conceptual design modifications for the park's physical changes and activities, consultations with interest groups and site users, and reevaluation of design propositions and methods applied.

My fieldwork for the design project started with an accumulation of data related to the site's current ownership status and management. I looked at its present role, possible plans for the site in the broader municipal context, and the concerns of interest groups toward its use. Occasional site observations, photographing the park and some casual questioning of users (and potential victims of my design intervention) took place during the winter of 1995-96. I conducted more formal and prolonged site observation in the summer of 1996, between late May and early September. Formal notes and systematic data collection were made during various sample periods (14 hours in total).

2.2.1 qualitative research through site observation (see Appendix 1 and 2, Tables 1, 2 and 3)

As an observer I have engaged in passive participation on the site. I was present at the scene of action but did not participate or interact with other people to any great extent. The social situation at Jasper Avenue and 102 Street is defined by three primary elements: the place (the park), the actors (the site visitors and individuals crossing it), and the activities (the walking through, eating lunch, chatting, etc.). In participant observation I focused on the activities of people, the physical characteristics of the social situation, and how it felt to be part of the scene. I began by making broad descriptive observations, trying to get an overview of the social situation and what took place there. Examples of two such broad observations would be: that the number of visitors changes depending on time, and that the two major kinds of activities occurring on the site are walking through, and staying in the park. After recording and analysing my initial data, I consolidated my research and began to make focused observations. Such focused observations included studying how people sit on the benches: identifying sitting positions, activities related to sitting, and emotions expressed while sitting. (see Appendix 8a-b) After more analysis and repeated observations in the park, I could narrow my investigation still further toward making selective observations. For instance, I had a special interest in single, late afternoon visitors and the activities they commonly engaged in. However, even as my observations became more focused, I continued to make some general descriptive observation notes until the end of my field study.

While analysing the social setting I could identify and document common patterns, in ethnographic research called "domains." The patterns of particular interest were those which suggested behavioural variations or commonalities influenced by the social setting and physical factors of the place. For example, the domain of "staying alone in the park" includes several variations which differ because of temperature, the number of people on the site, time of day, and the age of the individual. According to James P. Spradley, "in actual practice, most ethnographers adopt a compromise. They study a few selected

domains in-depth, while still attempting to gain a surface understanding of the cultural scene as a whole. "(Spradley: 102) Fieldwork observations were documented by taking field notes, (see Appendix 2) making photographs (see Illustration 6) and drawing maps. These fieldwork notes served as the basis for ongoing clarification of the focused observation, definition of domains, summarizing of the gained knowledge into behaviour/setting categories (see Appendix 1) and served as source material for design recommendations.

2.2.2 *qualitative research through ethnographic interviews* (see Appendix 3)

Ethnographic interviews were conducted in the summer of 1996. "Ethnographic interviewing is a special kind that employs questions designed to discover the cultural meanings people have learned." (Spradley: 123) I have interviewed persons of various ages and occupations. Of the 40 interviewees 17 were females and 23 were males.

The average age of people interviewed was 32. This closely reflected the average age of frequent park visitors observed on the site. "Ethnographers may acquire key-informants in a fairly haphazard way, through a combination of their structural significance, knowledge, social visibility and the ease of making their acquaintance." Care should be taken in selecting informants because of the implications of relying on particular persons. (Ellen: 225) One common criterion for the interviewees was their familiarity with the site (all have either used the park, spent some time near by, or work near by). A large percentage of the individuals interviewed were employed in service and retail positions (42%). Some of them were long time employees and knew the area very well; others were young, new, part time or temporary employees. I also approached lower and middle level office, security and reception employees (40%). The last major group included higher level office managers, professionals, and small business owners (18%). A small number of the individuals interviewed was directly involved in the management, upkeep and surveillance of the park (a police constable, a cafe manager, and a person in charge of the organization responsible for the park's maintenance and programming).

I decided to start my interviews with such descriptive questions as: "what do you like about this place?" and "what do you not like here?". This allowed interviewees to express their opinions and emotions in a more relaxed, open manner, before having to respond to more demanding, structured questions. Among the aspects I was aiming to discover in ethnographic interviews were people's perceptions of the physical aesthetic qualities of the site, their expectations for the site as a public place, their interpretations of its possible uses, and the role of the artifacts in the site as facilitators of social interaction and enjoyment of the place. I also was looking to identify problems related to the use of the site, and features or aspects which were of particular value and should be retained. During the process of conducting interviews, I did modify several questions to make them more easily understood and more effective in eliciting qualified responses. For example, a final question: "Would you like to see anything added to the park? If yes, what and why?" was added because several interviewees felt compelled to relate this information before closing the interview when they had not done so during the process of answering other questions. Perhaps more important, I noted that through making suggestions of added artifacts and features they were able to communicate their vision for the park as an effectively functioning place for public interaction and specific activities.

Interpreting answers requires even more care than asking questions. Even unsolicited statements require interpretation. I gave due attention to the specific, personal context from which individual remarks arose, asking what might lead a participant to see things in a particular way. "The goal is to obtain observations that give the researcher an understanding of the participants' perspectives on the topic of interest. This personal context may be based on the social roles and categories that a participant occupies, or it may be rooted in individual experience." (Morgan: 55)

I believe that the interviews I conducted were successful as I gained knowledge essential to this project and its methodological goals. The range of topics discussed seemed important to both me and the participants, and I was presented with a range of issues that I had not anticipated. The knowledge gained from ethnographic interviews

was a valuable "subjective and biased" addition to more objective knowledge gained through participant observation.

The chosen methods applied during the empirical assessment of the socio-physical situation preceding the design intervention enable me to better understand the specifics of the situation and to generate conceptual design propositions. They also enable me to create a framework of referential and qualitative knowledge necessary for particular physical design transformations.

Chapter 3

3.1 Summary of qualitative research findings

As a result of selective site observations (see Appendix 1 and 2, Table 1 and 2) and interviews (see Appendix 3) I discovered that this downtown space is used and appreciated by its visitors and people working nearby more than I had expected. An overwhelming majority of the individuals I have talked to used the word "park" when describing this site. All 40 interviewees stressed the importance of maintaining the site for use *as a park*. When asked what they liked about the park 55% percent of interviewees mentioned the greenery and 38% stressed the park's particular role as a green space in the middle of downtown, a pleasant break from the concrete surroundings. A similar number of people appreciated the proximity of the park to amenities and their work place.

The most frequent users of the site are people working near the park: retail, service and office employees; maintenance and construction workers; and bicycle couriers who come here to spend their lunch or coffee breaks. Others seen here less regularly are: seniors, transients, teenagers, parents with children and tourists. The purposes and duration of visits vary greatly. The activities taking place in and around the park can be divided into two broad categories: travelling, passing by or through; and staying in or near the site. The 'travelling' activity is rather constant, slowing down only at night.

This is largely compulsory activity, taking place under nearly all conditions, more or less independent of changes in the exterior environment. The 'staying' could be described more as an optional activity and its patterns fluctuate greatly depending on climate conditions.

3.1.1 fluctuations in patterns of use over various periods of time

As in many other downtown Edmonton parks, the first notable features of the park as a place changing in time, are its fluctuating levels of use (see Table 1) and the broad range of perceptions about the site held by users and passersby. There are both quiet and busy periods here each day, and through the year.

The busiest and most precious time spent in the park is the lunch hour period on a nice summer day. At such time the park fills with regular visitors and passersby who stop to chat, eat, nap, sunbathe, read, look around and, obviously enjoy themselves. Many interviewees defined the site in summer as a "nice place to be." Several also admitted that they: "walk by it more slowly in summer"; in these warmer months they "stroll through it, but hurry straight across in the winter time." The park's appearance and the number of people spending time in the park change dramatically when the outdoor temperature makes sitting outside less appealing. Typically the "quiet season" starts some time in October and ends in early May. According to my selective observations and responses from interviewees, the park is used very lightly or is virtually unused during this time; it looks "bleak" and it is "ignored by many." A few individuals did however admit that they like the park in winter too, especially the snow on trees. One person admitted that "there is not much opportunity for recreation in the winter . . . mostly because of the scale and because it is an unprogrammed, passive park." The park in Fall and Spring was described as a nice place to walk through and look at: "it's pretty in Fall . . . the leaves bring character to the park"; "very nice."

"In Scandinavia, the correlation between climate and the extent and character of activities is illustrated by a survey of pedestrian street activities in Copenhagen during

the period from January to July. During this period, as winter changed to summer, the number of pedestrians doubled, and the number of people standing tripled as a result of more frequent and lengthy stops. ... In January the activity distribution of people was approximately 30 percent standing and 70 percent moving, while in July the majority of activities - 55 percent - were standing and sitting activities. The pedestrian streets had changed subtly into streets predominantly used for standing and sitting." (Gehl: 177)

When describing patterns of daily activity, perceptions of the Edmonton park, and character of its use, I will focus on the busiest season - summer - because this is when most of the social contact and enjoyment of the site clearly occur, and the characteristics of common activities are easier to identify. (see Appendix 1 and 2, Table 1 and 2)

The park is used primarily on weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.. It is used sparingly in the evenings and during weekends even if the weather is good. The temperature and wind have a significant impact on the patterns and frequency of use. For example, the total number of people staying in the park during the same half-hour period - from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon - on a sunny but rather windy day (August 20, 1996) - was 3; whereas on a comfortably warm day with a light breeze (August 9, 1996) - the number was 22. On a windy day one can see people stepping out of Pastel's cafe with cups of coffee, and going back in or returning to their work places rather than sitting by a picnic table.

Visitor flow in the morning is quite uneven. The total number of visitors and the length of their stays vary. The flow more likely depends on weather conditions or the day of the week (more individuals linger on or stay longer as the weekend approaches). One can occasionally see some single seniors coming into the park, sitting down at a picnic table and watching Jasper Avenue as it is lit by the morning sun. They come alone and slowly leave alone as well.

The use of the site reaches its peak during the lunch hour rush. My observations showed that on a nice summer day there were approximately 47 visitors spending time in the park from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. The total numbers of persons staying in the park drops after 1:00 p.m., but the flow remains rather constant right until 5:30 p.m.

(on average there are 20 visitors per hour). There was a marked pattern observed in changes of groupings of people staying in the park during different periods of the day. (see Tables 2 and 3) Morning and late afternoon hours are popular among single visitors, and during the lunch hour rush more groups are drawn to the park. For example, the total number of people staying in the park on August 8, 1996 between 12:00 noon and 12:30 p.m. was 26; there were nine groups comprising 21 individuals, and three single visitors (12.5%). On August 14, 1996 between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. there were 11 individuals visiting as part of a group and 27, or 70%, single visitors to the park.

3.1.2 stratification of spatial patterns of use (see Appendix 1 and 2, Illustration 2)

3.1.2.1 compulsory activities taking place around and across the site

The park itself isn't a big place. It is a corner lot measuring 45 by 45 metres and faces a busy downtown intersection: Jasper Avenue to the north crossing 102 Street to the west. (see Illustration 1) There are people walking by, along the sidewalks, virtually every hour of the day and night. Two bus stops are situated on the edges of the park: one on 102 street and another on Jasper Avenue. The latter has an elaborate glass shelter with a bench and a pay phone. The areas around these bus stops and an information board on Jasper Avenue attract some individuals who linger on and wait, often walking around slowly and looking either at the park or at the busy streets. An occasional youth stops for a smoke in front of the information stand. A subtle range of standing, lingering activities can be observed around the park. People apparently enjoy being close to the park and the activity in it, while remaining in the "gray border area" of the park - not quite in, and not quite outside the park. Similar kinds of stops were described by Jan Gehl as ones where: "the act evolves from the short unceremonious stop to a real staying function, when one stops to wait for something or somebody, to enjoy the surroundings, or to see what is going on." (Gehl: 149)

Besides the activity around the site, quite a bit of walking, jogging and bike riding takes place across the site. Two natural diagonal paths slice through the park, turning it into a rather convenient and sometimes rather pleasant route. Many office employees and downtown visitors diligently use these paths all year round. On average, 46 individuals per hour cross the site during business hours. According to Gehl, "people prefer direct routes and shortcuts ... only very great obstacles, like dangerous traffic, extensive barriers, and so on, seem to be able to interrupt this pattern. . . . In a survey of a Copenhagen square pedestrians were found to cross the square on the diagonal, even though this meant that they had to traverse a sunken area in the middle of the square using two short sets of stairs." (Gehl: 139) The cross traffic through the Edmonton park peaks in the morning and just after work hours when many downtown employees go to or from the nearby parkades or bus stops. There are also people who cross the site while running their daily errands: going to the banks, delivering packages, or just going to Pastel's cafe for a cup of coffee. Of the interviewed individuals, almost 80% noted that they were passing or crossing the site almost daily.

Despite the common rationales to cross the site, people approach this activity in quite different ways. As my selective observations revealed, some people just hurry through it, others walk slowly in groups while engaged in intense conversation. People may eat or drink coffee on their way through, some look around, and some smile or even say "hi" to persons who appear to be strangers. On a weekend or a very nice summer day one can see people jogging through the site, riding their bikes or carrying skateboards as they go toward the river valley. The south and east sides of the park are used for passing less frequently. Fewer apparent destinations and the absence of formal sidewalks along these edges may explain this.

3.1.2.2 optional activities occurring on the site (see Illustration 2)

The first activities one might note occurring on the site would be those that people engage in while sitting at the picnic tables: eating, smoking, reading, chatting, just facing

the sun or looking around. (see Illustrations 8a-b) The picnic tables are usually positioned in the central area of the park rather than close to the edges. The area has a good mix of sun and shade and is flexible: it can be "reconfigured" by park visitors as all three picnic tables are portable. People sit at these tables in rather different ways. I observed a number of individuals using the table's edge as a back rest as they sat on the table's bench. In this position one can come close to replicating the more traditional seating position one would take on a bench with a back rest. Some of these individuals did not engage in eating. Rather, they just looked around; sometimes they chose not to participate in conversations with the rest of a group sitting at the same picnic table. A few people did lay right down on the table benches. Interestingly, most of these individuals were females who arrived with a group to spend some time in the park. Occasionally, visitors would straddle or "ride" the picnic table bench, or even sit on the table top. These individuals seemed to be making a special effort to face the person they were talking to. During busy periods of the day, there seemed to be a fairly significant range of styles of social and physical contact, and of emotional response.

People not only sit in varying positions, they also seem to feel and act differently. Some of them obviously enjoy the sun and outdoors. They close their eyes as they sit, smiling while facing the sun. Some are engaged in rather intense conversations where gestures, their sitting positions and their facial expressions are highly animated. Some just sit alone with their backs turned to the rest of the park crowd, or "tune out"quite fully, temporarily falling asleep.

When lunch hour approaches and the weather is pleasant, more people come by to sit and/or linger. People will spread across the site rather evenly. Patterns could be observed in their locations and groupings. I was able to identify several distinct areas of the park preferred by particular people with particular needs. Besides the central lunching, talking and smoking area which is used predominantly by people working nearby, there are three other areas which are popular among others for sitting. The south hill area becomes occupied by visitors when the picnic tables are full and the weather allows one to sit on the grass comfortably. On a busy summer afternoon the distance between individuals

or groups occupying the south hill area is approximately 3.5 metres (this can decrease to 1.5 metres if the hill is particularly popular). People sit and lay there freely, in various positions, orientations and groupings.

The south hill area seems to attract slightly younger people and those more casual in appearance and manner, than does the picnic table area. Two out of three times these hill area visitors will face the park and its activities as they sit. The other third get involved in conversations, sunbathe as they face south, put on makeup, or simply fall asleep. During busy times in the mid or late afternoon, the south hill area is enjoyed by a number of regular female visitors. They sit on one of the high spots of the hill, often reading or smoking. The absence of heavy traffic on the south and east sides of the park, as well as the very clear presence of large walls of adjacent buildings - the Royal Bank building and the parkade building - contribute to creating a spatial "backing" or "refuge" for persons staying in the park and facing the busy downtown intersection.

The southwest portion of the hill area, where the square planter boxes are located, is often occupied by individuals and couples who seek some privacy. They commonly face either the south parkade wall or 102 Street. This area gets quite a bit of late afternoon sun, and is enjoyed by some solitary visitors or persons waiting for the bus. Many lean on the edges of the planters.

The northwest area of the park is a shaded section, especially the areas along 102 Street, the extreme northwest corner, and the immediate surroundings of the bus stop on Jasper Avenue. Individuals observed in this area are were usually waiting for buses, either sitting on the lawn or standing while waiting. Some younger "unconventional" individuals (among this park's users), teenagers, or bicycle couriers come here for a short rest, chat or smoke. They are somewhat visually separated from the rest of the park and other visitors because of the shade from trees in this corner.

The park area least often used is the northeast corner, especially the lawn area near Pastel's patio and the entrance to the DBA office.

Short visits to the park are made by some who check the garbage for cans and bottles, pick up old newspapers or panhandle. These are comparatively infrequent visits.

3.1.3 *users' cognitions of the site as a particular socio-physical setting*

(see Appendix 3)

One half of all interviewees are regular users of the site, and almost 80% informed me that they pass or cross the site almost daily. When asked if they could identify unique features of the site, 30% could not. Some 22% interpreted the site's bareness and absence of distinct features as, in fact, a particular park feature, but that this allowed them to "have some peace and get your head together." For these individuals, this park was a "place more tucked away than others," and hidden by lush trees.

When asked to define what they liked about this place, 55% were quick to note the greenery of the site - describing the trees which are primarily located on the north and west sides of the park (along the streets) as "well kept, lush, and looking neat, like umbrellas." Thirty-eight percent mentioned the park's convenient location in answer to this question, and 30% remarked on the social interaction which occurs here. The possibility of continuing to come to relax in the park was important to 45% of interviewees. Some went to great lengths to describe how this park offers an opportunity for them to "veg and meditate," "sit back and relax," "not to worry what other people think of you," "find some peace" or "unwind and release stress." Many individuals expressed their desire to spend a comfortable and enjoyable time here while having lunch or a drink.

Activities people wanted to be facilitated in the park were even more extensively and clearly communicated in the interviews as people were asked about objects or features which could be added to the park. All 40 people had suggestions. Over half of them (23 interviewees) felt that there was a need for more seating: more benches, chairs, picnic tables; some suggested "other places to sit" (most likely some secondary seating), and/or "temporary seating" (for viewing performances, other entertainment). Some interviewees had noticed that "some (local) workers go there at lunch, find no place to sit, and leave" or "half the people don't use the park because they can't sit on the grass in their work clothes. Particular suggestions regarding the placement of the seating

were given: along the diagonal path; give some choice between shade and sun; also benches by the bus stop on 102 Street would be an asset. According to some interviewees, these benches should look "nicer," be sturdy and, (about the picnic tables especially) should have "some tiling" under (it would be easy to clean and looks good).

Thirteen individuals would like to see some entertainment in the park which would take place in summer or even in winter as well. They saw the park as a possible site for "winter activity like downtown lighting, First Night"; a site for "ice sculpture display," some "winter carnivals"; "for tobogganing for children"; a place for summer festivals, concerts; Fringe plays; a "little plaza for street performers"; or something else "to amuse people." Some interviewed individuals suggested a stage, even if it would be small, "a little plaza," a "platform for bands," or some "recesses, areas set back from the sidewalk for performances."

Fifteen interviewees wanted better landscaping in the park: some greenery, more trees and shrubs, flowers in the park, fill the "patchy grass," and/or "add some hard landscaping." It was easy to note that greenery had a strong influence on individuals interviewed. Many of them described the landscaping and plants in the park as something: "noticeable, attractive"; "for beauty"; "for colour"; "some prettiness." There were also practical suggestions rising when interviewees mentioned greenery as possible additions to the park. They mentioned that plants and trees should be "sturdy"; could create "some more shade"; "block that plain south wall of the parkade," or that "spruce trees would look nice in winter, especially on the south side."

A food concession was another popular suggestion given. Fourteen would like to see: "portable" food vendors during lunch hours, an ice cream stand, concession service, some vendors, and/or a coffee shop which would be open for bicyclists in the evening. Several mentioned the previously removed ice cream stand and wished that something similar would be reappearing on the site.

The issue of safety also elicited lengthy and qualified responses and consequent explanations. Eighty-five percent of interviewees were quite sure they felt safe in the park during the day. Nineteen, or almost half, thought the park area was safe because of the

physical features of the park: its good visibility, good sightline to activities taking place in and outside the park, its openness, its size, and the absence of hidden corners. Forty percent noted that the presence of others passing along Jasper Avenue or crossing the site made them feel safe in this place. My selective observations support these responses by interviewees. Sixty percent of all park visitors were female. According to related studies I have read, this considerable percentage of use by females is a strong indication of the perception of safety in a particular public place.

Interviewees responses indicated that some would, or did, feel less safe in the evening (many interviewees did not spend time near the site in the evening). Just over 40% of individuals felt safe in this area at night as well as during the day. It was interesting to note that females and males had remarkably similar levels of the perception of vulnerability with regards to this area. Forty-one percent of females interviewed felt safe around the park at night; the figure was 43% for males. The most frequently mentioned reason for feeling exposed and unsafe around, or in, the park was the presence of "different kinds of users in the evening": young people wanting to start problems, people asking for money, people selling drugs. The lack of sufficient lighting during dark periods of the day was noted as a possible contributing factor to some seedy activities occurring and perceptions of the place being unsafe. Some individuals mentioned that their perceptions are affected by the "stigma of downtown at night." Particular areas of the park site were mentioned as especially unsafe at night: the areas away from the path and in the south-east corner near the parkade. Individuals who felt safe near this park all the time stated: that this is one of the safest parks in the city; there are fewer social problems here than in other downtown parks; there isn't much activity between 7:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. and/or that police patrol regularly. Constable Rob Mills of the Edmonton Police Service often surveys this area. He noted that this park is not a high-crime area, but that police do need a clear view and good lighting to be more effective in surveillance. Police often observe the park from the south alley. The bus shelter on the north side cuts some view from the sidewalk.

3.2 Constraints and Potentials

I have been able to identify certain constraints and potentials critical for the further development of the design propositions for this particular socio-physical situation. As I stated in the initial assumptions and goals for the project, a fundamental objective is increasing the quality of life through facilitating social interaction and the enjoyment of open spaces.

Several spatial-physical constraints are common when design interventions are considered for existing urban environments. Among the obvious constraints are: the limited and defined size and shape of the park, the surrounding high-rise buildings which block much of the morning and evening sunlight and are major cause of downtown "wind tunnels," heavy street traffic bordering two sides of the site, and, of course, the inevitable five-month winter which forces most public activities indoors. One must account for these factors by introducing some physical changes to the site. Changes must, however, be economically sustainable and operationally viable. This sustainability involves a scope of factors including efficient management and landscaping strategies which would reflect climatic and other physical conditions, and social strategies addressing extent of use and personal safety issues. Some constraints demand that the designer remain realistic in the scale and degree of transformation proposed. If the Royal Bank building blocks most of the sun light in the morning, there simply won't be people relaxing on park benches in January and February at 9:00 a.m. It won't matter how comfortable or beautiful these benches may be.

Nevertheless, opportunities to increase the park's quality and quantity of use, and people's enjoyment of the place, do exist. Activities already established and carried out in the park can be encouraged and their duration extended. One of the important directions taken in conceptualizing and realizing a positive shift toward bringing diversity to the park, making for a rich sensory experience, and fostering social interaction, is careful analysis of existing potentials and building upon these inherent advantages. I identified current potentials for improvements during and after site observations.

Despite the limited sunlight in the morning, the park gets a fair amount during the day (from 10:00-10:30 a.m. to 5:00-6:00 p.m.). The trees on the north and west sides create a partial visual separation from the busy street, and also block much of the view of the high-rise buildings. This partial separation gives this small place a good balance of openness and seclusion. The existing trees also block much of the street noise, helping people to relax and appreciate the natural surroundings. Some additional visual ground level separation from the street might be an asset, especially during the cold seasons when the leaves have fallen and the park becomes more fully exposed to Jasper Avenue.

The hill area on the south side of the park provides a slightly elevated and remote area, convenient for sitting and observing the place and the activities around it. The traffic behind the hill area and to the east is light. The buildings help create a sense of "refuge" for individuals facing north.

Despite covering only one square "building lot" the park is already quite noticeably divided in use and physical features into several spatial - functional clusters which would be advantageous to retain. These uses and features can be more readily sustained in the future because they appeared as a result of natural and spontaneous processes.

The optional activities in the park reach their peak of intensity and variety when the weather conditions allow for comfortable and prolonged stays outdoors. The necessary activities (walking by or through) occur concurrently with optional activities (sitting, taking a walk, standing around). Prolonged activities form the base for social interaction: conversations between people and casual greetings. Social activities observed on the site occur primarily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on warm summer days. There is a chance to extend some kinds of optional and social activities by adding required infrastructure elements to the site: benches and other seating facilities. Physical changes to the site and a wider range of recreational choices could help draw more people in after business hours and on weekends.

3.2.1 the importance of varied and flexible seating in the park

Some individuals who walk through the site, or pass it, would come and sit down at least briefly if more seating were available. Several times I observed people who thought about sitting down, but decided against it. A person once targeted a picnic table for a short rest while waiting for the bus, but then decided to stay closer to the bus stop (possibly the picnic table was too far away, or visibility to the street was not as good). Many single visitors (especially the elderly) planned just to sit down (not to eat), but seemed reluctant to *take away* a seat at a picnic table even if there was one free. Couples or individuals would sometimes come to the park with lunches, but there would not be places to sit at a picnic table. After looking around, they would either leave right away or stay for a while waiting for a free place to sit down. These particular actions illustrate the constraint having inadequate and insufficiently varied seating poses. Of course, it can be easily reversed. Careful consideration of existing patterns of stationary activities could reveal how additional seating can most effectively be introduced.

Some visitors want to sit alone. Others engage in conversation. Some people want to lie down. The variety and the flexibility of the site fixtures introduced to the park must support the range of emotional and social needs of the various visitors.

"Among the requirements that are satisfied, in part, in public spaces, is the need for contact, the need for knowledge, and the need for stimulation. These belong to the group of psychological needs. Satisfying these is seldom as goal-oriented and deliberate as with the more basic physical needs, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and so on. For example, adults seldom go to town with the expressed intention of satisfying the need for stimulation or the need for contact. Regardless of what the true purpose may be, one goes out for a plausible, rational reason - to shop, to take a walk, to get some fresh air, to buy a paper, to wash the car, and so forth." (Gehl: 117)

Still, one has to acknowledge that the site use is going to continue to fluctuate throughout the year. Perceptions of abandonment and emptiness in the slow seasons

should not be emphasized by overloading this little park with unattended rows of benches.

It remains possible to create a sufficient microclimate in the park for people to spend some time even in the winter. Protection from both the wind and full exposure to direct sunlight might allow visitors to stop here for a short rest and enjoy the outdoors.

3.2.2 possibilities to enhance and enrich the sense of intimacy and warmth

Besides the chance to sit down, many people expressed the desire to have more greenery and landscaping in the park. It was in part communicated as a longing for natural visual diversity, and in part through requests for "some care and prettiness." The possibility for small scale, occasional entertainment and/or food vending was desired as well. Individuals interviewed had two kinds of basic concepts for the park's use. One group wished for some activity and social commotion, the other group clearly appreciated peace and quiet. Individuals interviewed expressed their understanding of the size limitations of the park, and of the limited range of recreational uses and facilitated activities. Nevertheless, they seem to be generally content with the scale of the park, and with its role as a "passive" park for relaxation and peace. The advantages of compact, small scale public spaces were interpreted by Gehl in his book Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space: "The relationship between distance and intensity, closeness and warmth, in various contact situations has an important parallel in the prevalent perception of architectural dimensions. In cities and building projects of modest dimensions, narrow streets, and small spaces, the buildings, building details, and the people who move about in the spaces are experienced at close range and with considerable intensity. These cities and spaces are comparably perceived as intimate, warm, and personal." (Gehl: 71) It seems to me that a little extra intimacy and personality would not hurt Edmonton's downtown.

As I have noted, many people cross the park throughout the day, and all year round. According to my observations and the responses of interviewees, proper facilities (including drainage and good paving) would be a welcome addition to the diagonal paths.

It would make walking across the site easier for the hundreds who do this each day. Some of them might even linger on, look around and enjoy themselves.

3.2.3 enhancement of the perception of safety

An important asset to the park, and a condition for visitors feeling satisfied and relaxed in such a public place, is its safety and its ability to convey a sense of being safe to its users. This park already has a reputation among the people working nearby as being fairly safe. One only has to take a glance at the park from any sidewalk to clearly see it all. During site observations I saw a few panhandlers who asked for change, but that was the extent of what I saw, that was perceived as a nuisance or threat to some users. The presence of many single visitors sitting around during various periods of the day reinforced my belief that the place is very safe. A different perception of the site at night is most likely due to insufficient lighting and the absence of people in the park. One has to also be realistic about the extent of use of this site after 11:00 p.m. Still, good, not necessarily very bright lighting can deter antisocial behaviour and make the park's paths more pleasant shortcuts for late travellers.

Chapter 4

4.1 Design recommendations for site use and management, propositions for physical changes to the site, interpretation of recommendations in relation to similar cases, and consequences of design interventions

The findings resulting from the qualitative research I have undertaken suggest that there exist two related areas of concern with regard to design recommendations: conceptual recommendations for site use and management, and proposals for physical

changes. Personal judgement weighs into the conceptual recommendations approached in this case study, as I have made certain assumptions and set certain goals. This is true to an even greater extent with regard to proposed additional artifacts. For these reasons, design recommendations have to be understood as my own vision of the design for this park, reflecting the observations made and goals set in this project.

The organization of this chapter will be based on the potentials and constraints described in Chapter 3. Operational design propositions will be followed by propositions of physical modifications to the site.

The facilitation and encouragement of a wide range of social activities in the park have been identified as the potentials which, if realized, will ensure the overall success of this place as a downtown public park. Various levels and kinds of activities can be supported through more effective and focused design interventions where there are already established areas of use. Existing physical features of the park, and site visitors' willingness to use them, have allowed "subspaces" to be identified - spaces where differing activities are carried out during various periods of day and year. (see Illustration 2) Areas characterized and established by frequent day to day use are: the central picnic area, the northwest shaded area, the south hill area, the partially secluded southwest area, the park edge area along the sidewalks of Jasper Avenue and 102 Street, and the diagonal paths which effectively "slice" the site into quarters. The approximate size and location of each of these subspaces are indicated in the appendix. The overall size of each of these subspaces is not so small as to give a potential visitor the feeling of entering a private room or intruding on the privacy of someone who may already be there. Nor is the size so large that one would feel intimidated or alienated when sitting alone or with few others in the park. The introduction of any new features to any of these areas should maintain, or allow for, clear but subtle subdivisions and transitions between various areas of activity, to avoid persons feeling segregated in a particular area. Careful analysis of, and subsequent design decisions for, individual segments of the park will be critical to the success of the entire park as a vital public space.

4.1.1 design recommendations, by area (see Illustration 3, 7a and 7b)

4.1.1.1 central area

Throughout the year the centre of the park is the area used most extensively, and for the most prolonged periods, for stationary activities. As mentioned in Chapter 3, people working nearby use its picnic tables for lunches and short coffee breaks. The areas' tables are used by senior citizens in the morning for sitting and observing activity on Jasper Avenue. Some individuals waiting for buses use these picnic tables as benches. The area is somewhat flexible, as the picnic tables can be, and are, moved around quite often. In summer, the good balance of sun and shade is an asset of the centre area of the park.

This area is suitable for activities such as eating, reading, or relaxing while sitting on a bench, and because it is close enough to the diagonal path and sidewalks, it can be easily accessed during all seasons. The benches and tables which exist here provide opportunities for sitting early in the morning when the lawn is still damp or the temperature is too low for sitting on the ground. Should the seating be oriented toward the sunlight and if there were sufficient protection from the wind, this particular part of the park could be used more often, even if for short periods of time, in winter.

In order to encourage extensive use of this segment of the park, one has to preserve the opportunity to move the picnic tables around, and introduce some stationary seating for other sitting activities.

Some six picnic tables could be placed here in summer to satisfy "formal" lunching needs. Ground tiling in particular areas could be considered, easing a garbage cleanup, though it might limit the flexibility of picnic table placement and take away some precious lawn. Therefore, the addition of tiling to this area should be approached with caution. At least two benches should be placed along the diagonal path leading from the northeast to the southwest corner. These would allow for people to sit down for a short rest, and to watch others passing by without feeling they need to occupy "eating table" spaces.

According to my research and observations, benches placed near the entrances to the park would be preferred by senior citizens with reduced mobility.

4.1.1.2 south hill area

The south hill is a part of the park enjoyed by many visitors during the summer. It is slightly elevated from the centre area, and situated away from the Jasper Avenue. On this lawn area many individuals find a place to relax, sitting or laying in the most widely varying positions and groupings. The hill area's important features - its slight elevation, exposure to sunlight and its adaptability to various activities should be retained and highlighted. For more enjoyable summer use and an improvement to the sightline, the lawn should be maintained and protected, and low rising vegetation could be introduced. I further propose the design of a unique feature which would facilitate established "hill activities," as well as some new ones. An amphitheatre-shaped system of stairs sunk into the southeast corner hill would offer varied seating options at different elevations, a good "lookout" point, and serve as a visual attraction of the park. Here, architectural elements and people "occupying" them would be the objects of some visual curiosity and enjoyment, and would help make this park look and feel somewhat unique or special.

The proposed stairs (see Illustrations 4a-b) comprise two semicircular stair systems with four steps on each side. The two stair systems are at different elevations, joined by a circular flat centre platform. Dividing the two sets of stairs, and breaking at the centre platform, is a diagonal, gently sloped access ramp. The main body of this stair system would be approximately eight metres in diameter. The relatively small scale of this system would foster close social contact. Any undesired contact or uncomfortable situations can be avoided by one sitting slightly farther from other visitors, and at different levels. The upper semicircular stairs would allow for individual and group seating, while having an inward orientation. The lower semicircle offers visitors an opportunity to sit near one another, still being able to look around, or to stay alone instead and orient themselves

away from others. The diagonal ramp allows easy access to the amphitheatre from the west and east sides and will be wheelchair and skateboard accessible. In the winter, the railing might be removed and the ramp covered with sufficient snow to allow for children's tobogganing. This structure of stairs would make it attractive for summer lunch hour concerts or a mobile "ice cream centre." The circular centre platform could be used as improvised stage, the stairs interpreted as seating for an audience. Park lighting provided around the amphitheatre (see Illustration 3 and 7b) would not only make this area feel safer to be in, but also safer to cross in the evening. The lighting might make the area more "usable" during the dark period of the day, especially in winter.

The addition of small scale entertainment to the park was suggested by 30% of individuals interviewed in my study. The results of one related survey, Project for Public Spaces (Project for Public Spaces, Inc, 1984, in Cooper Marcus: 28), revealed that during four different events on different occasions, 87 percent of those attending had been introduced to areas they had never visited before, and 73 percent said they had patronized a business on the way to the event. "Thus, programs in urban spaces may not only enliven and animate space but also educate people about downtown and be good for business." (Cooper Markus: 45) Nevertheless, the importance of this park's established reputation as a quiet retreat - a place to find some peace and enjoy nature - should not be underestimated or challenged by adding a tremendous buzz of programmed activity and frequent entertainment. Fifty percent of interviewed individuals expressed a strong preference for peaceful relaxation here. This small park can hardly fulfill both visions for the public space simultaneously, but it is possible to accommodate each set of activities at different times. Further, the amphitheatre stair system is a versatile structure interpretable by users. With its real or implied borders, the system constitutes a "separate" space wherein the provisions of food vending or occasional entertainment may not interfere significantly with other users' wishes.

4.1.1.3 diagonal paths

Both diagonal paths in the park are used extensively throughout the year. This despite the fact that it becomes more difficult, and less enjoyable, to make shortcuts through the site during wet and cold seasons. The paths are natural, therefore, unpaved. The wider path does have some gravel coverage but it is not effective in protecting people from mud, puddles or ice hazards. (see Illustration 6) Some drainage must be considered for the northeast corner - the major entrance (or exit) to the park and an area of heavy pedestrian traffic. The puddle and ice covering which appear every year in this area are problematic for people crossing the park in winter, fall and early spring. They further create an impression of poor maintenance and neglect.

The curvatures of the natural paths were noticed and appreciated by several interviewed individuals. When tiling or paving is added to these paths, it will be important to consider retaining their natural character. (see Illustration 5) Gentle curves would add some warmth and variety to the clean cut, hard edged downtown landscape. As pedestrians are quite sensitive to pavement and surface conditions, cobblestones, sand, loose gravel, or any uneven ground surfaces are, in the case of this site, unsuitable. The many current and future visitors who have mobility difficulties need smooth paths. I suggest using a tiling which is fairly expensive when compared to other alternatives, but which offers many functional and aesthetic advantages.

The circulation and the sitting or relaxation areas of the park need to be made distinct enough for effective functioning of the park, while the transition between spaces remains unimpeded. Delineating the path as it has been established by use will help keep pedestrians moving in a consistent stream. Some benches, street lights and lawn area should be sufficient in serving as a transition space between traffic areas and resting areas. Several park lights are necessary to ensure safe travel through the park, as a majority of office employees crossing this site are en route to or from work in the dark hours of the morning or evening, through much of the year.

4.1.1.4 edge area along Jasper Avenue and 102 Street

The north and west edges of the park are used primarily for short stops by people waiting for buses, pausing for a smoke, taking a short rest and watching the park or the street, or reading the notices on the information board. Most of these activities are of short duration. When the weather is pleasant, more people can be seen lingering on here. Walking along the edge of such spaces gives a person a twofold experience - viewing either the street or the park from the same vantage point. In the dark, or in bad weather, being able to move along a protecting transition area feels safer.

Many individuals passing the park via the sidewalk might be encouraged to enter and use the place if this edge area were developed to serve as an "invitation" to the park. Some objects to stand by or lean on could create a comfortable spot to linger, and may further serve as invitations to the park. Several clusters of secondary seating and shrubbery can create a border along the perimeter of the park. Backless benches could be set next to low shrubs and several entrance/exit areas of the park. This style of benches would provide people with options to sit facing either the street or the park. Shrubs would support a sense of visual separation from the street. It is especially needed in winter, when bare trees create little shade and the park is exposed to the busy streets. Gaps between the clusters of benches and shrubs could be interpreted as places to stand or linger on (perhaps waiting for a bus) and further, as an additional entrances to the park.

4.1.1.5 southwest hill corner

Physically, the southwest hill corner is tucked away from the busyness of downtown by the crest of the east edge of the hill, the slight dip in the landscape, the concrete flower boxes on the west side of the park, and the metal beam fence which separates this area from the south back alley. Though it is a somewhat remote area, it does not appear particularly secluded. It is most appreciated by individuals seeking some privacy - those who want to sit or lay on a grass alone, or have a private conversation. These

people often face south or look toward 102 Street.

Some physical additions may make this area more appealing and pleasant for those wishing to be alone, groups seeking privacy, or young couples. It is also important not to clutter the area with very tall objects and plants which would block the sightlines and render the area less safe. The intimacy of this portion of the park may be maintained or improved while it remains sufficiently open and easy to observe from outside. I suggest the addition of annuals and decorative shrubs, especially along the south beam fence. Some colour and greenery would break the bareness of the parkade wall and create some visual separation from both the wall and the alley. In winter the shrubs will serve the same function and will be attractive when snow covers the branches. One-person stationary benches, could be placed around the flower boxes as well for individuals wishing to sit alone.

4.1.1.6 east edge area

The east side or edge of the park is used less for 'staying' than other portions of the park. Some reasons for this were discussed in Chapter 3. Office employees working in the Royal Bank building can observe the site through their office windows. Perhaps more important, there is considerable circulation of pedestrians in this area. People are frequently going in and out of the adjacent buildings, crossing the site and going to or from Pastel's Cafe. As the northeast corner is a particularly high traffic area, there is a rationale to leave it for use by those crossing the site, walking by or standing. The west edge area a little further south is used moderately in summer for relaxation. It also needs some visual separation from the adjacent office windows and pedestrian traffic. To this end I suggest shrubs and some seating. These will respectively create some visual separation and partially fulfil the general need for increased seating in the park. This part of the park needs some lighting as it is perceived as the most unsafe area at night.

4.1.2 provision of varied seating (see Illustration 3, 4a-b and 7a-b)

The high priority given to the provision of seating implies some dependance on object-oriented design to facilitate public interaction. However, many hours of site observation, readings of related case studies and the responses of interviewees have all made clear that well designed and placed seating is essential to a public place and the facilitation of more prolonged optional and social activities. Having a place to sit, one is more likely to become engaged in covert socializing (watching the world go by) and overt socializing (getting together).

This park at Jasper Avenue and 102 Street is an intimate space which, in urban design terms, can be classified as a mini-park or a small city plaza. The established patterns of use observed suggest that additional and varied seating is needed in this park generally, and in most areas of the park. It must be chosen carefully and economically. All edge zone seating could be provided by wooden backless benches. When unoccupied, these benches would continue to serve as a part of the border. I suggest the introduction of benches with laterally curved seats and back rests to be placed along the diagonal paths. One single bench of this style would also serve well on the east side of the park to help create a partial separation between the high traffic area of the edge, and the larger lawn area. These would remain during winter in the park, and would be lit by the sun most of the day, making them among the most appealing seating options. At least three more picnic tables added in summer would help satisfy the demands of brown baggers. Picnic tables can be removed in late fall and reinstalled in early spring. The benches along the edges of the park and the diagonal path will satisfy the reduced seating demands in the colder months. Further, the amphitheatre stairs will provide park visitors with plenty of secondary seating, accommodating various groupings and seating orientations. A portion of the stair system could perhaps have grass coverage, offering more comfortable and "warmer" seating.

In investigating seating in a number of squares in central Copenhagen, Jan Gehl found: "benches with a view of the most trafficked pedestrian routes are used most, while

benches oriented toward the planted areas of the squares are used less frequently." (Gehl: 29) Places for sitting along facades and spatial boundaries are preferred to sitting areas in the middle of a space; in standing activities, people tend to seek support from the details of the physical environment. "Sitting places in niches, at the ends of benches, or in other well defined places where one's sitting position renders one's back protected," are preferred to more exposed places. (Gehl: 161)

In this park in Edmonton, if edge zone seating is considered and designed as secondary seating, and the picnic tables are removed in the winter, less than half of the primary seating would remain on the site - plenty to satisfy the demand. While I maintain that there are specific considerations and significant factors which are critical to designing appropriate seating for the park in question, it still would be a good idea to acknowledge the results of a very revealing study of Manhattan plazas conducted by William White. Following a detailed evaluation of outdoor seating behaviour, White reported: "After three months of checking out various factors - such as sun angles, size of spaces, nearness to transit - we came to a spectacular conclusion: people sit most where there are places to sit." (William White, in Cooper Marcus: 26-33)

4.1.3 balance between visual variety and natural surroundings

An attempt to create visual variety in this park and balance the variety with the natural surroundings does not mean one priority must be asserted above the other. Rather, it means that in the attempt to add some physical structures and details to the park toward accommodating various social activities, one integrates the additions with the nature in the urban park, preserving the site's greenness and its calming and relaxing qualities. The greenery, the landscaping and the physical features of the park can and should complement each other. This balance in fact helps people feel at ease there. Objects such as benches, paved paths, the amphitheatre, and park lights can be beautiful as parts, blending to make an effective whole. They can help us notice light, shade and greenery, and show off the people spending time in the park.

The designed objects should be sturdy, made to be, and appear, long lasting and well finished. "For the user to maintain a sense of value, (the products) should not only be repairable, maintainable and age well; the product concept, itself, must be truly useful; and the product must be designed in a way that does not pander to extravagant but short-lived fashion trends."The design will have an "enduring elegance." Walker gives this attribute the term "macro-simplicity." "However, diverse or variegate surfaces in the same product can help to ensure that its aesthetic qualities will not diminish with time, because abuse can be more effectively absorbed without detracting from the overall visual aspects." This attribute Walker terms "micro-complexity." "The qualities which a micro-complex surface could exhibit include texture and variation in texture, variation in colour, irregularities in contours, diversity in finishes from glossy to matte, and intentional 'imperfections'. The richness of chance effects, both in surface preparation and during product use, also can be explored." (Walker: 23) Simple balanced forms can be complemented by the rich textural finishes of the natural materials used in their creation. An honesty and simplicity of the design will show in the results.

For this particular park I believe a softer "finish" and smooth curves or circles should be at the core of the formal direction, for both furniture and more complex structures. (see Illustration 3, 4a-b and 7b) The park is surrounded by the rectilinear: straight, hard edged high-rise buildings, and streets on a grid. There is already much literal and figurative regularity and structure in many people's lives downtown. It seems the park should therefore offer an escape, an alternative. Trees, shrubs, flowers, and landscaping that includes modest but observable changes in level, are aesthetically appealing because of their forms and colours. Beyond the formal qualities, I suspect that urban dwellers also appreciate recreation opportunities in a vernacular North American downtown landscape. In this setting they appreciate nature in broader terms: as living matter and as a self renewing system which stands in sharp contrast to our concrete surroundings.

The idea of public spaces as different from what we perceive as focused, rigid and precise in our everyday lives is closely related to the idea of public space as a void or gap between sites, structures and situations. This idea is central to my understanding of

the value of public space as a space which is open to interpretation, a space where action occurs: where the major defining features are the activity, the people, their emotions, and their interaction with the environment. The concept of a used and valued spatial gap in the urban fabric stands as my vision and as a challenge to the notion of public urban space as a devalued or abandoned space. Through my formal design propositions for the park, I suggest introducing structures and objects which will not overwhelm the user or spectator by their appearance. Rather, the proposition is for objects and systems which would create an aesthetic satisfaction in use and connect with the existing buildings which surround the site, and the greenery and sunlight of the park. In this interpretable gap, people can discover their own identity and territoriality. Objects themselves would not dominate the park and dictate behaviour. Rather, such a space could be filled most importantly with people's interpretations of their relation to the place, and to others sharing it.

This "place in between" is experienced and appreciated as a park to use casually, and on a "daily" basis. It serves an important role in the dynamics of downtown, and on the spectrum of outdoor public spaces. Other open places: louder, busier sites, or those made visibly distinct by features such as large fountains or monumental structures, are also important threads in the fabric of the centre. The richness of the urban experience throughout history has depended on diversity and visual variety.

4.1.4 consideration of economic, environmental, use and management factors

As with every public place, this particular park will be well used, maintained and cared for if the necessary political, economic, environmental and social factors are at work. Design can contribute positively to these ends, and create some of the preconditions necessary to making the park an asset to the downtown area.

Cold and long winters are a significant constraint when designing for a public place outdoors. Being physically comfortable is a fundamental human need, and, with regards to temperature, means we need to be in a setting which is between 20 and 24°C.

People are affected by climate and react to it even when their response may not be conscious. During the winter in Edmonton, the combination of wind and cold temperatures creates, on occasion, wind-chill factors exceeding -45° C - enough to freeze flesh in less than one minute. In addition, sun angles at noon at winter solstice (22 December) are only 13 to 15°. To increase comfort levels for persons outdoors in winter, it is important to create maximum protection from the wind and maximum exposure to the sun. Trees and shrubs planted along sides of the park can serve well as a wind buffer. Stationary benches with backrests, remaining for use by park visitors in winter, should face south. Outdoor social activities are, in general, important to foster in the cold, dark months as mental health is adversely affected by isolation and other winter stresses. This downtown park can be part of our city's provision for this activity.

For summer, the park already boasts much necessary shade thanks to the many mature trees on the site. Further, "there is an aesthetic appeal to old trees rising clear from an open grassed sward uninterrupted by obstructions. It is a landscape that is achieved all at once, and is encouraged in urban parks because it permits maximum use of the ground plane for human activity. But this is a landscape without a future; the ultimate death of the old trees leaves nothing in their place. It will be years before the new trees planted now can recreate the original environment." (Hough: 112) Planting several additional trees now will help create an optimal balance of exposed and shaded areas. Future generations should gradually replace the aging or ailing greenery on this site. Leaves of trees and shrubs in this park can absorb pollutants such as ozone and sulphur dioxide to significantly improve air quality in the area. "Urban vegetation can mitigate ozone pollution by lowering city temperatures and directly absorbing the gas. . . . By way of illustration of the effectiveness of trees in removing sulphur dioxide, . . . to take up the 462,000 tonnes of sulphur dioxide released annually in St. Louis, Missouri, it would require 50 million trees. These would occupy about 5 per cent of the city's land area." (Hough: 265) To achieve economic feasibility and sustainability of the site design and maintenance, one has to consider following working rule: *minimum expenditure followed by maximum gain and effectiveness*. In the case of design propositions for

this downtown park, I suggest taking the direction of creating and introducing to the site, physical elements which are well built and look like strong and valuable objects. The objects should be able to stand up to everyday wear and use. Initial higher expenditure in the infrastructure and better materials, is more likely to pay off in less frequent breakage, extended life, and less vandalism (site users and neighbours will be more likely to survey and care for the place).

The overall site design should facilitate use of the park by people with disabilities. For example, there should be no steps without a parallel ramp for wheelchairs, and paths should be wide and levelled enough to accommodate people using wheelchairs or walkers.

Landscaping does not always require labour intensive maintenance, or big investments. Site specific approaches to urban landscape creation can relieve parks managers of a lot of extra work. "One alternative is a more intelligent and less intensive use of mowers to permit plant diversity and wildlife habitat to become management objectives. . . . By cutting only those areas that (are) necessary for recreation, fire hazard and similar factors, and leaving remaining grassland unmown during the summer months, a far greater diversity of bird species (could be) created in a very short space of time." (Hough: 132)

4.1.5 creation of an atmosphere of safety in the park

The park currently has a reputation as a fairly safe place in Edmonton's downtown. People have seldom had concerns beyond the annoyance of being approached by an occasional panhandler during the day or witnessing a small amount of antisocial behaviour during the evenings or night. This place is seen by people as an appropriate and safe place for socializing and relaxation. One of the major improvements design measures can make is the introduction of sufficient lighting in the park. (see Illustration 3 and 7b) Better lighting for public places does not necessarily mean brighter light. "Better lighting means an adequately bright level of lighting directed or reflected toward the horizontal surfaces -

faces, walls, street signs, mailboxes, and so forth - in contrast to the lighting of streets." (Gehl: 167)

Design recommendations and physical changes to the site should enhance the feeling of safety in the park area without at the same time creating additional problems such as substantial visual obstacles and blind corners. Additions or changes should not make more likely or noticeable vandalism, graffiti, or accumulation of garbage.

The creation of a sense of safety in a place is a complex process. It can only start with a careful design which addresses local problems and site specific requirements. Social interaction processes and their changing character will either support a designer's goals or negate them. Should the latter process dominate, further reassessment of design transformations and a search for new solutions should begin. The recent history of Beaver Hills Park, only a few blocks west of this one, provides an important lesson. The intent of the original design, made a few years ago, was the creation of a "naturalistic park; an 'oasis of green' that would offer peace and tranquillity against the busy backdrop of the adjacent streets." (Keith: 26) This was accomplished through the use of four-metre-high grassy berms and moderately dense mature plantings which blocked out the street scape and created intimate areas with very short sightlines. Not long after the park was finished, problems of crime and unacceptable activity were already emerging. The design of elements (or rather, the elimination of some earlier designs features) to increase visibility into the park - lowering berms and opening up entrances - was supported by interest groups in the city and people working near by. By removing screening and shadows, the effectiveness of the park's existing lighting systems was also improved. "Since the park's redevelopment - completed in late 1993 - loitering and illegal activity has decreased and there has been a substantial increase in the number of legitimate visitors to the park." (Keith: 26)

4.2 Evaluation of public reactions to design recommendations

Near the end of the preceding stage of the case study, conceptual propositions for the park's use and physical changes were proposed. These design transformations, as well as some qualitative research findings, were then summarized in a visual presentation. (see Illustration 7a-b) In order that I might evaluate public reaction to the design recommendations, ten participants among the group of interviewees questioned in the first phase of research were asked to express their opinions, thoughts and reactions to the information presented to them. Each of them was interviewed in the summer of 1996 and was familiar with the place and with the focus and goals of the case study. Individuals were advised that the purpose of the follow-up interviews was to gather information to determine directions for further study and the design propositions' development.

Participants were shown a park plan indicating defined areas of established use. The plan of the park also showed the proposed layout of an infrastructure, objects and landscaping. Some of the designed elements were presented in greater detail: the amphitheatre, lighting, paving of the path and seating designs. The nature of this phase of interviews was rather open, general, and conceptual in character. The aim was to stir discussion and invoke speculation about the use of the park, prospective problems regarding the site's safety or maintenance, how the visual qualities of the transformed public space would affect people and the social setting, and how the changes would impact on the broader downtown area. After examining drawings, plan views of the park, photographs of the site and photographs of the models of proposed objects, individuals were presented with questions. (see Appendix 4)

When asked what they liked the best in the plan presented, and why, interviewees frequently answered that the proposed seating, lighting and amphitheatre structures were good elements. Many said that the amphitheatre was a desirable feature: it would accommodate some entertainment in the park. This stair system was interpreted as "pleasing to the eye," a stage and platform where concerts, theatrical productions, rallies and other activities could take place. It also was described as "able to seat a lot of

people." The park lighting was noted as a necessary addition to ensure a safe atmosphere in the park. These lights would also make the park look more attractive at night. Participants liked the proposed broken band of shrubbery which would define the park's edges. The patterned, "interlocking" paving of the diagonal paths was appreciated and expected to provide easier access to and through the park (many remarked on the importance of wheelchair access). All individuals liked the proposed design in general, a few mentioning the "the overall view"of the transformations in the park which seem to make it look different from the "square buildings all around."

Participants did relate some concerns they had regarding the park's maintenance and use:

- shrubbery around the park's edge should be kept low enough that it does not block views into the park.
- regular year round cleanups is important
- keep the flowerbeds from "getting too muddy."
- paths need to be maintained (cleared) for easy wheelchair access and safe walking in the winter (cold temperatures and costly snow removal were acknowledged as big obstacles to wide use of downtown parks in winter)
- skateboarders will "unfortunately" enjoy the amphitheatre and paved paths (according to one participant, and there is "not much you can do about it")
- keep entertainment centred around the amphitheatre area so that other areas may be used concurrently for quieter relaxation

One recommendation for a change to the proposed plan was raised by several participants:

- gaps should be left in the shrub line along the back alley: "break it up, keep the sightlines, and don't give places for people to hide or lie behind"

Two suggestions for improving the use of the park arose:

- position a light at the north or north west edge of the amphitheatre which may be used to light evening performances
- organizing special winter events in the amphitheatre area would attract more people and "brighten up the downtown."

All interviewees agreed that the proposed design recommendations would attract more people to the park overall. Each would visit the park more often themselves and use it more extensively in summer, spring and fall. The reasons given for their expected increased frequency of use were: the park would look more pleasant, it would be more comfortable and safer, there would be more places for sitting, and there would sometimes be entertainment or something "going on." One of the participants claimed that the park would become the best alternative for outdoor relaxation near by.

Every interviewed individual believed that the proposed seating arrangement would help to draw more visitors to the park to have lunch or spend a break, and "to stop by when there is entertainment." The changes to the paths would make passing through easier, and more people might stop, sit down and stay longer here. The lighting and the activities in the amphitheatre would deter much antisocial behaviour, as would the general wider and increased use. The park, according to interviewees, would be more accessible for people in wheelchairs. An even broader range of individuals and groups of people might be using the park. Most interviewees do not believe this will be problematic: "lots of different groups of people use the park now too, and they seem to get along all right." Participants believed that having this "better park" was worth any trouble it might be to deal with possible problems related to increased use.

Interviewees saw themselves doing the same things in the proposed park setting that they usually do in similar situations and places: having lunch, reading a book, relaxing, getting some sun, spending a break, and bringing children to run around in the park.

Nine out of ten interviewees stated that the proposed design could accommodate quiet relaxation and public activity at the same time. Quiet relaxation would still be possible in areas of the park away from street noise and performances. Most interviewees agreed that the site currently serves both kinds of activities at different times, and concurrently. Different areas of established use, and the separation of sections provided by the paths, explains how this can continue to happen.

Participants anticipated that the proposed changes would enhance the real and perceived safety in the park, if it is properly maintained. Safety, according to interviewees, will be further ensured by the addition of lighting and the slightly more extensive, wider and smoother paths will allow for an easier escape from problem situations. If the hedges are "kept low, well lit and broken in line" the visibility should remain good even with proposed changes (it will "still be open to view"). The increased number of expected users will make the site safer during the day as well as in the evening. According to one of participants, some problems are still unavoidable, as they are everywhere downtown and cannot be completely eliminated.

At this point in the case study, public reaction obtained through interviews with park users allowed for critical reflection on the proposed design recommendations. No matter how closely the designer is working with the users within the socio-physical setting, the transition from accumulating and interpreting information toward the physical design proposition is still a creative act. Without diminishing the importance of creativity, these follow-up interviews were a way for me to confirm or refute my proposals as appropriate and acceptable to the users. It was important and reassuring to conclude that I did not misinterpret participants' initial suggestions and concerns regarding the design changes. I believe the second interviews were successful and the participants well chosen as I obtained concise, direct reactions that were engaged and enthusiastic.

Interviewees also had some insightful and practical suggestions toward making this park safer and more suitable for intended use. Some of these suggestions regarding the design I had overlooked or had not anticipated (for example: special attention to the

shrubs along the back alley). Input from the study's participants was evaluated and subsequent changes to the design propositions for the park were made. When public reaction to many of these factors is acquired, it is possible to avoid spending additional money and extending further efforts for "redesigning" to alleviate safety and maintenance problems. The redevelopment of Beaver Hills Park, just three blocks west on Jasper Avenue serves as a good example.

The quantity and style of such follow-up interviews, and the evaluation of public reaction to the design throughout its development, can be determined by the complexity of the project and its specific requirements. The participation of users, the general public, experts and stakeholders in the project can be advantageous in each particular stage of a design's development. Prudent application of these working methods may allow the design to be developed in a more responsive and cost efficient way, where one can account for changes to environmental, social and economic conditions.

The development of the design propositions in this thesis is thorough to this point, but further steps would be necessary before implementation were arranged. The conceptual propositions would have to be eventually described to the necessary degree of detail for realisation to take place. Persons involved in the construction, management and use of the park would be consulted regarding certain aspects of the final design proposition. Much of the further work would involve discussions with city managers, planners, contractors, ergonomists, the police, and business and social group representatives.

Chapter 5

5.1 Review of assumptions

This design project, as it has been developed and presented to this stage, has resulted in conceptual propositions aimed at encouraging and facilitating social interaction and the

enjoyment of a particular open urban space. Analysis of the site, activities and cognitions of park visitors, and interviews with participants have served as sources of qualitative information for the reevaluation of assumptions for this design project. The process of reviewing the assumptions can be understood as the first stage of reflection on the initial ideas and concerns which motivated me to become engaged in this particular project. The results and findings of the empirical assessment of the socio-physical situation can only be conclusive to certain extent, as the physical design intervention has not yet taken place. The particular ideas at work have not been fully evaluated. Nevertheless, assumptions made in relation to this project are general enough in character to be supported or challenged through achieving a better understanding of the physical and social context within which the design intervention would arise. Any further revision or reflection on the design assumptions must take place as the modified environment functions, and as it changes through use.

My initial belief that social interaction is a public good has grown stronger, as I have had the opportunity to do extensive observation of the site, and witness real life evolving in and around this little park. A sense of the importance of social interaction in an outdoor setting, as part of personal fulfilment, was formed by my own experiences, casual observations of various public places and situations in European cities, and theoretical inquiries. Through this case study I was able to get a good glimpse of the social contact which occurs in what was - for me - a relatively new context: the North American context. It is different from, but comparable to, socialization processes I observed elsewhere.

The quantity of social contact in the park did not surprise me much. I believed that despite the tough competition from downtown food courts and surrogate indoor 'health markets,' many would come to this outdoor site, and spend significant periods of time. In terms of qualitative use, I was more surprised. It was easy to remark on the positive effect the park has on people emotionally. People's behaviour, facial expressions, and gestures reflect their emotional state as they absorb some sun sitting on a bench with their eyes closed, or slow down and smile while crossing the park. The crowd enjoying the benefits of this public space does seem to be more homogeneous than I had

anticipated. People visiting the park are most frequently downtown employees coming to spend their break time. The homogeneity of current users, and the fluctuations in park use, do not diminish the quality or importance of such a place or the experiences of it. To some degree, these facts should be accepted as part of contemporary life in Edmonton and many other cities. Still, a designer, with his or her creative transformations, can encourage more extensive, enjoyable and safe use, and provide the opportunity to participate in social interaction to a broad spectrum of society. This public good provided by a park, and experienced by many people, can be shared and increase the quality of life. A creative design intervention can, and should, help make this happen.

Throughout the history of urban development, outdoor public spaces have gone through dramatic changes and transformations in use. Many were the most beloved, often sole, city plazas - places where everything important in people's lives took place. Many still function this way, and the designs are fundamentally unchanged. The transformations in appearance and use of public places, have resulted in other spaces such as paved lots found in Los Angeles ghettos - with tall wire fences, and enlivened by graffiti on the walls. The emergence of increasingly heterogeneous societies, with considerable social and economic inequities found in these same physical and social conglomerates, has broadened the spectrum of descriptions of public spaces, and led to some segregation. The park at Jasper Avenue and 102 Street in Edmonton has a place on this spectrum. Though it may be underdeveloped, my research shows that it is a vital place for outdoor social interaction - a place which has a very real chance to thrive and be effective in our city's particular social-economic-physical setting, providing the design intervention encourage and expand on existing potentials.

As part of the site observations I conducted in the summer of 1996, I looked not only at the park, but also neighbouring indoor and outdoor public spaces. During the day, food courts in the malls, cafes, restaurants, and school yards were used to a similar extent and with similar frequency to the park on Jasper Avenue. Most of the public places (or to be more precise - *semi*-public places) examined were used by people because they had particular advantages, or they had services provided on the site. Indoor food courts

and courtyards seemed to be rather convenient places for office people and service employees to get a "quick bite to eat." This convenience, the commodified indoor environment, and range of choices in food, shopping, and entertainment for various wallet sizes, seems to attract significant numbers of people at lunch time all year around. Despite this tough competition from the cultural and economic mega mall "establishment," outdoor urban parks and other public spaces still attract their loyal visitors. The pursuit of what is perceived to be more physical, accessible, varied and real, attracts people to such places. The survival of the park on Jasper Avenue and 102 Street depends on how these valued qualities are going to be preserved and fostered in the near and distant future. This plausible, outdoor alternative space can have a positive impact on the social microclimate in the area, and allow reinscription of the vital connection between the spaceless digital indoors and the elemental outdoors.

Striking this kind of balance in today's urban environment is a formidable task. The meaningful design intervention described in my assumptions implies a degree of complexity the designer must face in pursuing creative transformation - to change things in essence, not just in appearance. My attempt to create the operational tools for such a challenging task has lead to further questions and discoveries. Through my fieldwork and theoretical inquiry, both considered part of creating a meaningful design intervention, I was able to uncover prerequisites for more substantial, and therefore more reflective creative responses to some of the observed socio-physical variables. Such responses more readily foster other creative acts, together laying the ground for a successful reinscription of public life in this Edmonton urban park. The "rules" for meaningful design intervention are not universal, but are rather reinvented and changed for various times and tasks. The designer cannot be completely 'right' or 'wrong,' but must aim to negotiate values. Interventions will be more meaningful when the designer has a good understanding of the particular context, the ability to see the "bigger picture," and can build on one's own, or others', previous experience.

5.2 Review of design recommendations

5.2.1 evaluation of gained knowledge in terms of its relevance to the local context

Design recommendations presented in Chapter 4 reflect my conceptual understanding of what constitutes a meaningful creative response to challenges posed by objectives set for this project. Recommendations further reflect my consideration of the dynamics of social life in this particular area of the downtown, and in Edmonton in general.

At the time when the recommendations for site use, maintenance and physical changes would be realized, I expect this park would become a popular and extensively used space not only during the lunch hour, but throughout the day, and year round. Design recommendations and anticipated transformations to this downtown park reflect my broader vision of public space design in the context of the city as a whole.

I contend that the downtown concrete, glass and steel shell has become too big for the shrinking workforce and infrastructure that sustains today's economic activity and carries out municipal and provincial affairs. "The number of provincial government employees working downtown decreased by 9,600 positions or 55%, from 1982 to 1993, the city estimates." (MacDonald: D2) The necessarily more flexible, and currently unpredictable nature of business and the economy suggests that the downtown area would do well to use small scale, well targeted urban developments. Such developments would include infill housing with a provision of public spaces and amenities, and remodelled existing offices which can be adapted to the local, home-based offices and one-person operations now carving their niche in Alberta's economy. Most downtown transformations taking place along these lines would best serve a narrow segment of the population - the middle business class. Nevertheless, newly adopted physical transformations could provide the rest of population with a more accessible and inviting environment to coexist in and share. The challenge posed to planners, designers and city officials is to make not only appealing, but economically competitive housing and land

development alternatives and places - right in the heart of the city.

The Edmonton metropolitan area has a great deal of green space for weekend recreation. Places such as the river valley, and other large parks such as Hawrelak Park, are among the city's greatest assets. The existence of such large parks does not negate the need for small, intimate, spaces woven into the pattern of existing and evolving downtown and suburban built environments. Provision and use of small urban parks remain important for recreation and making social interaction visible again in our everyday lives. Some of the places we might transform for this purpose include: schoolyards, segments of strip mall parking lots, abandoned railway lines, areas surrounding transit stops, and other places where sufficient demand for the facilitation and acknowledgement of public life exists, and should be provided for.

"It's not going to be easy to reverse decisions that wiped out older buildings and turned Jasper Avenue into office towers and banks." (MacDonald: D2) Most of the new development trends downtown tend to serve the "big box type users." (Not long ago, the Staples company opened their megastore at 101 Street and 103 Avenue). Tall buildings are easier to relate to when paired with something smaller, of a more human scale, near by. Design modifications to the park on Jasper Avenue and 102 Street would help break the visual monotony of the area established as historic downtown buildings were replaced with featureless high-rises.

In terms of environmental sustainability, a grid of carefully situated green spaces in Edmonton will reduce the impact of pollution, noise, and microclimate changes caused by extensive urban development. Such a network of parks also serves to make Mother Nature's own gifts to the area more enjoyable, and her winter more tolerable.

5.2.2 urban design context

Perception and use of public spaces are changing in Edmonton as they are in many Canadian and North American cities. These changes are not always reflected and supported in facilitation of infrastructures and landscaping. It takes time to decode life

patterns in transition, and to adjust design, financing and maintenance strategies to make implementation possible.

As reference material, case study findings are, to some extent, limited in how they may be connected to the broader urban design context. Using such findings might, nevertheless, become one of the only effective ways to make a connection between what designers produce today, and what actually needs to be designed to reflect the broader realities of our urban life. Long term municipal development plans, renderings, and elevations of architectural projects, are testaments to working strategies of the past. They are concerned with a "finished" result, with objects, and with a long range plan which puts everything in the "right order," clearly defined and determined ahead of time. The clarity of goals in design as a process, and a better understanding of how to make our efforts and qualifications fit each particular design situation, has to effectively replace the "long range planning" methods and strategies concerned with production of objects and infrastructure. Many answers lie in how real life situations and experiences inform and direct design actions. Working toward design recommendations for this Edmonton downtown park gave me some insights into what can be achieved locally, and what transcends the local - "side-effects" in the broader urban living context.

As locations for social activities, outdoor places have a greater chance of retaining their importance in the urban context when they are designed to draw people from the proximate, local urban areas and less frequent visitors from farther away. We have to accept the fact that locally, our urban infrastructure is formed more or less along traffic arteries and is viewed through car windows. Knowing this, we can situate some public spaces within clear sight from highways and major thoroughfares. The visual exposure from traffic areas does not mean that all city parks and squares have to be placed three metres from the street. The proximity and legibility of the public spaces can be communicated through rows of trees or shrubs, signage or gateways (even to small parks). Realistically, looking around the city while travelling by car is one of the few opportunities we may take to "look" at many places and activities.

We perceive many streets as hostile because we long ago gave up considering them "living spaces." Nevertheless, they are legitimate public places. They are hardly recognizable as such because their physical features do not adequately reveal their public function. When commercial and public investment strategies are laid out, it seems hardly worth the trouble to reinscribe a place for a sense of living "in between" for teenagers hanging out in front of the local strip mall, or for a few seniors waiting at a bus stop. Nevertheless, such considerations and reinscriptions produce a very real benefit - people and places are connected, a dimension of real time and space is added; a place is added to our life pattern which is slower, and not digitally accessed. Such places are vital to many people for mental and emotional balance, including, but not exclusively, those who cannot afford exotic trips to far away places and secure indoor comforts. The concepts communicated through the design of the public spaces have to be economical in their visual language. The intent of use should not confuse visitors. Still, the places must remain interpretable by people with differing social and cultural backgrounds.

Visual clarity is geared toward increasing the many qualities the space will have. It is going to impact on the attitudes of its users by reducing incidents of vandalism and antisocial behaviour. Nevertheless, the belief that social problems and friction between various social groups are going to be eliminated remains utopian. The social contact occurring in urban spaces may well help different groups learn about each other directly and indirectly. The park may therefore be invaluable as a sort of stage, on which the actors will inevitably relate in some way, breaking down the ignorance and fear which lie behind much aggressive behaviour. Here they may learn to live side by side, and to respect one another.

The enjoyment of socializing in an outdoor public space is closely related to an appreciation of the physical environment in which this contact takes place. Urban vegetation has often been promoted as a very important component in reinforcing feelings of satisfaction, relaxation and enrichment in city living. In some cases the presence of urban greenery is perceived by users as a symbol and reminder of a "connectedness" to very fundamental issues in life, and of one's ties to nature. This important contact is

a valid experience even to one who looks from the car window, and certainly to one who jogs along an urban trail or plays on a school yard lawn. The tree in a square provides shade, but it also contributes to the general experience of urban living in an important way.

Place and climate sensitive vernacular landscaping for urban public spaces is not just some aesthetic addition requiring much costly grooming. It becomes a central and equal design element in the processes of perception of the public space, its microclimate creation and its utilization. This landscaping has a natural ability to serve with a "reduced materials flow" and fairly long life cycle. Trees and grass are natural, self sustaining and renewing components of our day to day life. Considerable potential benefits are to be found in more extensive and focused reintroduction of vegetation to our living spaces.

5.2.3 design discipline

Knowledge and experience gained, in this particular design engagement, could be described through the analogy of "seeing the general through the details." The details, in this case, could be understood as the particular and unique situation arising in a social, cultural and physical setting, where the design intervention can modify some of the communication processes occurring between systems, people and objects. In this sense, the development of design propositions for the park in downtown Edmonton was a good analytical and practical exercise. While considering the park and users' connectedness to larger socio-physical systems, it explored the particularities of temporal and spatial transformations according to place and types of use.

Besides focusing on urban space design in general, I came to understand that transformations for this public space would be more effective if the designer (or other person engaged in this design action) understands what goes on here, and at what times. The experiences and tools used to push changes through are not necessarily the same as those needed for another site, even one just around the corner. Cultural, economic and other factors may vary. What I was able to gain personally from this project was an understanding that the design tasks are, or have to be, dictated by situations which can

differ greatly depending on the specifics. Such a design can only be accomplished only through a flexible approach, where learning is continuous and the ability to discern the common from the particular becomes the critical tool to avoid "automatic" repetitions. Repetitions would be the result of employing a simplified and deterministic approach, where experience gained through practising design has forged a set of "truths," in turn becoming directives. Maintaining the ability to be open to change, to the reevaluation of one's beliefs and methods of work, is not easy for us creatures of habit.

We are surrounded by an abundance of objects and structures; connections between them are often superficial or tenuous. The objects and systems do not always relate in a way that is intelligible to the users or responsive to context. Exposure to such objects and systems may not hurt us physically, but may be nonetheless humiliating. Whether we are talking about a poorly designed tool, an unnecessary new facade on a neighbourhood supermarket, or an "Abmaster" which falls apart after three days of use, the results are similar: the object has failed to be useful. The consumer or user feels cheated, that his or her real needs were not considered in the design.

What has to remain the designer's common thread through the processes of professional inquiry, discovery and decision-making, is a sense of responsibility for actions taken. Central to responsible designing is competent use of skills, and an openness to change, the exchange of ideas, and learning from those for whom we design.

5.3 Review of design criteria

5.3.1 review of design methods

While working on this project for a public park in Edmonton, I have stopped a few times to think about what would possibly be the design outcome should I have approached the task in a "traditional" way. Perhaps I would take a site plan and spend the majority of my time trying to design and "fit" pieces of furniture and architectural elements into

the site, relying on my common sense of the usefulness of objects and groupings, and on subjective reflections about the aesthetic qualities of the product.

There would likely result some basic similarities to the proposition I in fact came up with: in both cases there would be benches and some paving in the park. What I believe would be missed in the design of an object-oriented environment are contextual and temporal factors. Only through the inclusion of these factors could I design in a responsive way, using the aggregate of objects as a "medium for action," for design and transformation of the *process* of social interaction, where the particular requirements of the process would shape the form, the layout and the aesthetics of the objects. The approaches differ in the mode of thought and in the mode of creative activity. I have attempted to practically apply this "contextual" kind of thinking, primarily through using working methods which allowed me to "practice" designing and reflect on my methods' effectiveness at the same time.

The challenge I faced at the beginning of the project was to identify, and become familiar with, the various sources of supplementary information it would be necessary to gain. I had to establish the appropriate operational tools I would need to use to achieve a sound working strategy. For this study, I determined that qualitative research undertaken through participant and site observation, ethnographic interviews, comparative data and case studies, and a more general, interdisciplinary inquiry would be the foundation for the first phase of the project. This phase was concerned with the conceptual propositions for further use of the park and the physical transformations necessary to ensure it. Despite the analytical challenge posed by taking this route, the gains in professional confidence and my ability to make informed decisions were rewarding.

The scope and the complexity of a design task have to be reflected in research methods as well. In this stage, I was able to "borrow" and adapt research methods from the social sciences, toward a better understanding of the social contexts involved in the project. Some contextual aspects which had a direct impact on the design development had to be examined in detail. Some others had to be approached as supplementary,

and examined in a cursory fashion. As one might expect, the user was to be the focus of the research. The user further became the main partner in developing the design. As the design process approaches the stage of making proposals for the physical elements, a greater reliance on the quantitative data has to be made. The focus shifts slightly from understanding the perceptions and beliefs of people, toward facilitation of their interface with the environment.

Understanding and practising design as a process-oriented activity implies reevaluation of the design throughout its lifetime. However, this is rather complicated to accomplish practically. Designers often retain the copyrights to the objects they create, but they rarely get an opportunity or request to modify the design, or follow up on its results and impact. Designers are deeply involved with an object while creating it, but become detached when it becomes, for example, a household product, an advertisement or an interior. Requests to "redesign" may often be interpreted as a personal insult by the author. A reassessment of the role and responsibilities of a designer may result in a redefinition of the design process wherein a designer may view "reevaluating a design" as part of his or her creative role.

Creativity and skill in producing highly aesthetic and influential artifacts must not be undermined or undervalued in the design process. A design's success is relative. It will be appreciated as it relates to factors beyond aesthetics. Accepting responsibility as a professional also means that one must find her or his own place in the creative process, often with colleagues from other fields who have something of value to say about the development of a design idea. The egocentric stance of the designer as creator and author must yield considerably to the stance of the consumer or user - the interpreter of the design.

5.3.2 the interdisciplinary connection

Design is both an activity in its own right and part of a network of creative processes. In the network context, the creative interventions a designer proposes have to be defended

as they adapt physically, psychologically and analytically to a form appropriate to its audience. Rather than yield responsibility to persons working in other disciplines, designers would do well to collaborate with professionals in other fields. This pooling of resources can be achieved through employing common operational tools in conducting research and evaluating results, and approaching specific stages of design development in liaison with partners. In the interdisciplinary partnership a designer has to be quite clear where his or her competences lay and what the objectives of his or her work are. This will be necessary if one is to provide a platform for constructive interdisciplinary dialogue. Much of the groundwork toward developing these methods lies ahead for the design profession.

Professionals from various disciplines creating the mechanisms for harmonious urban living must simultaneously conceive their own effective working mechanisms, ones which will improve communication and the working process. This interdisciplinary collaboration is vital not only during stages of the concept development, but also when considering the mechanisms for design implementation. Mutual understanding and personal willingness to cooperate has to be complemented by a common rationale, and an insight into the economic benefits of this kind of process. All of this will be necessary as a project's initiators must achieve and anticipate financing, maintenance and modification proposals for a project, as it will evolve within the processes of time and use.

Tables and Illustrations

Table 1

Number of individuals crossing and staying in the park

(averages on a weekday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

----- staying in ——— *crossing*

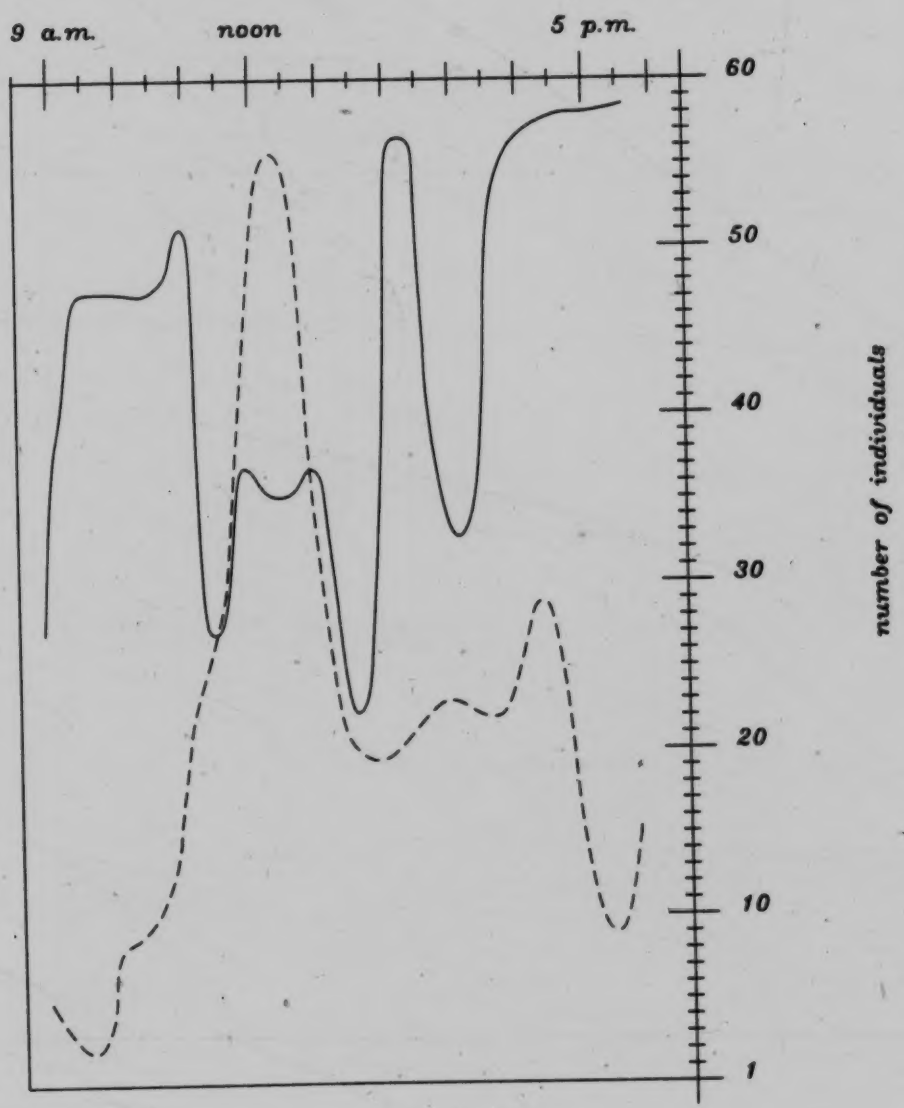


Table 2

Number of individuals staying in the park alone or as part of a group

(averages on a weekday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

– – – – – groups ——— *single visitors*

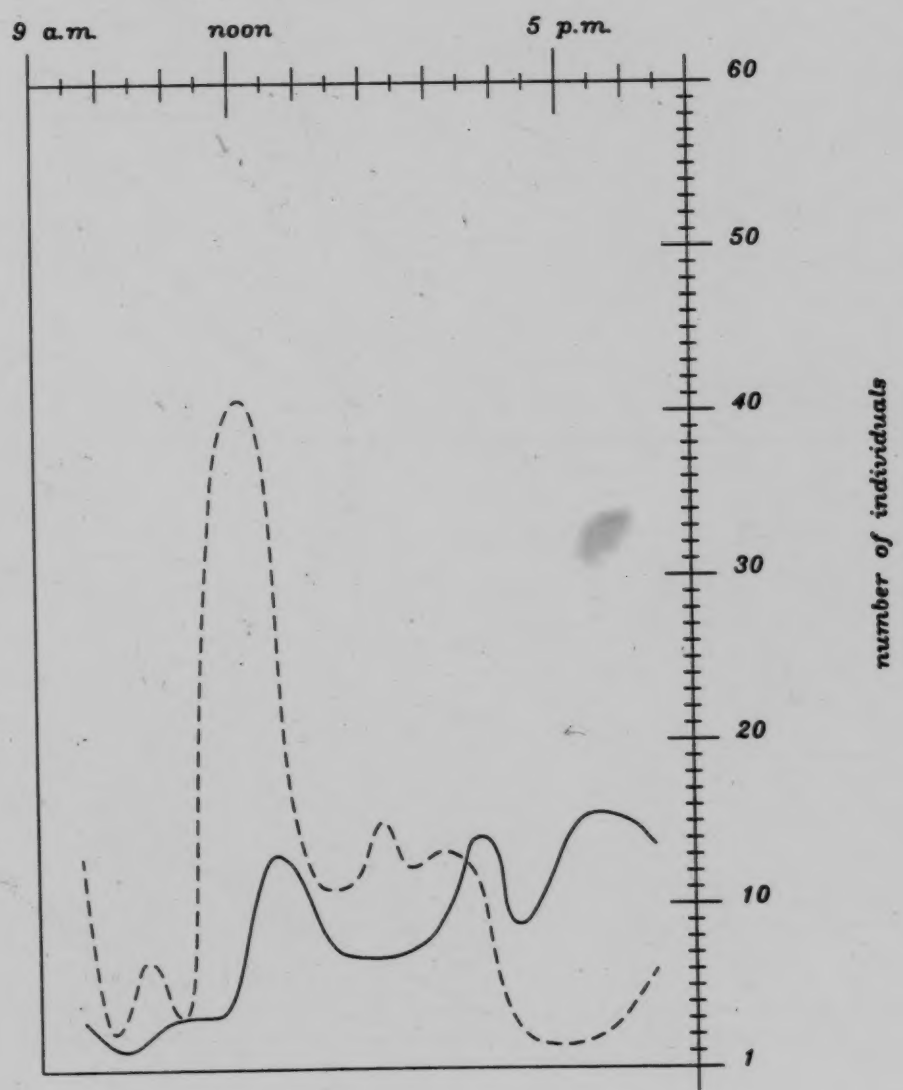
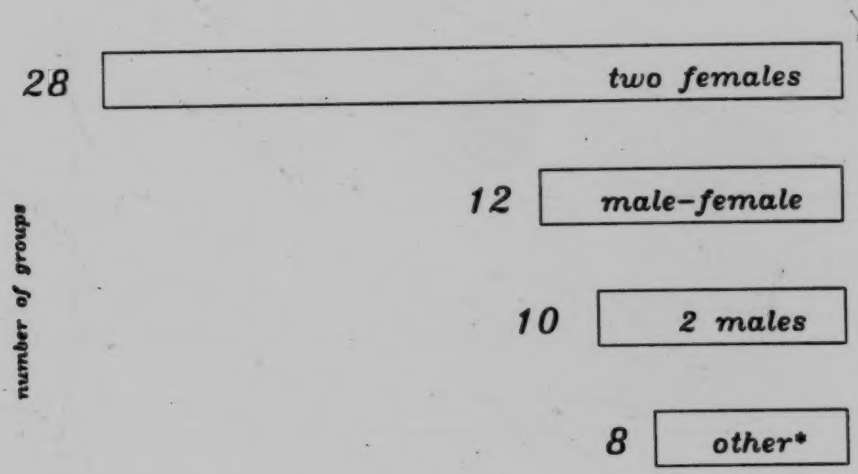


Table 3

Groups of individuals most frequently observed in the park

(all groups seen visiting during 14 hours of random site observation)



* various groups including parents with children, larger groups of adults, etc.

Illustration 1a

Jasper Avenue area map indicating the location of the park

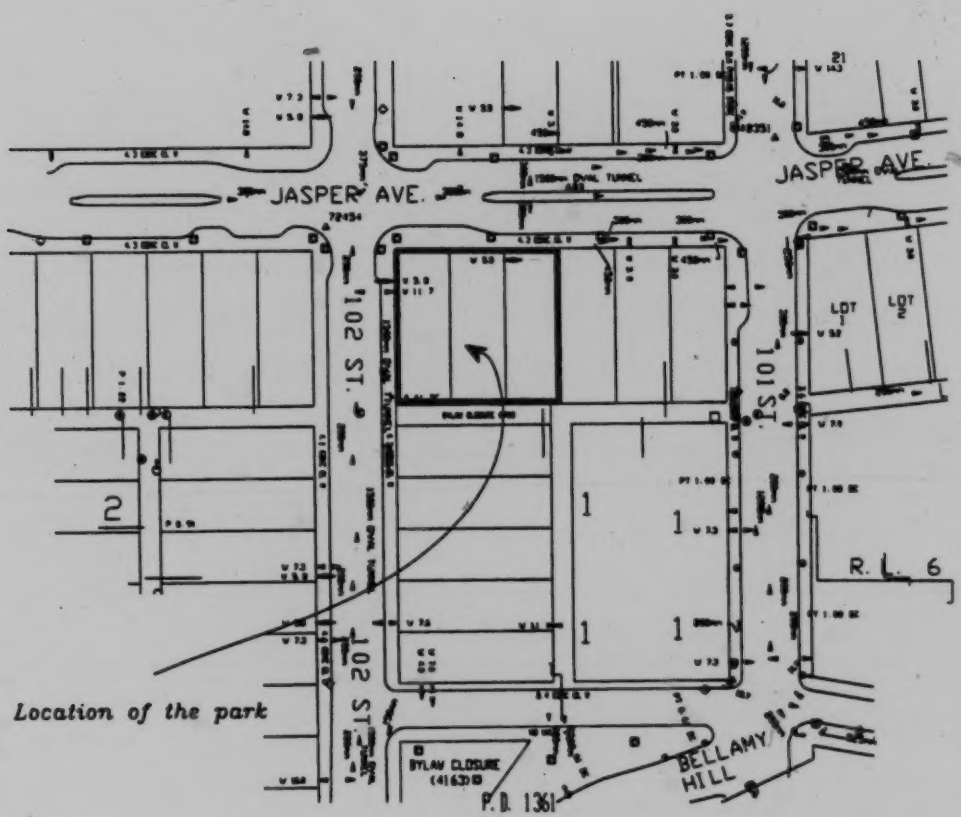


Illustration 1b

Photo: view of the site looking south from across Jasper Avenue, summer

Illustration 1c

Photo: aerial view of the site from top of parkade at south end of park, summer

Illustration 1d

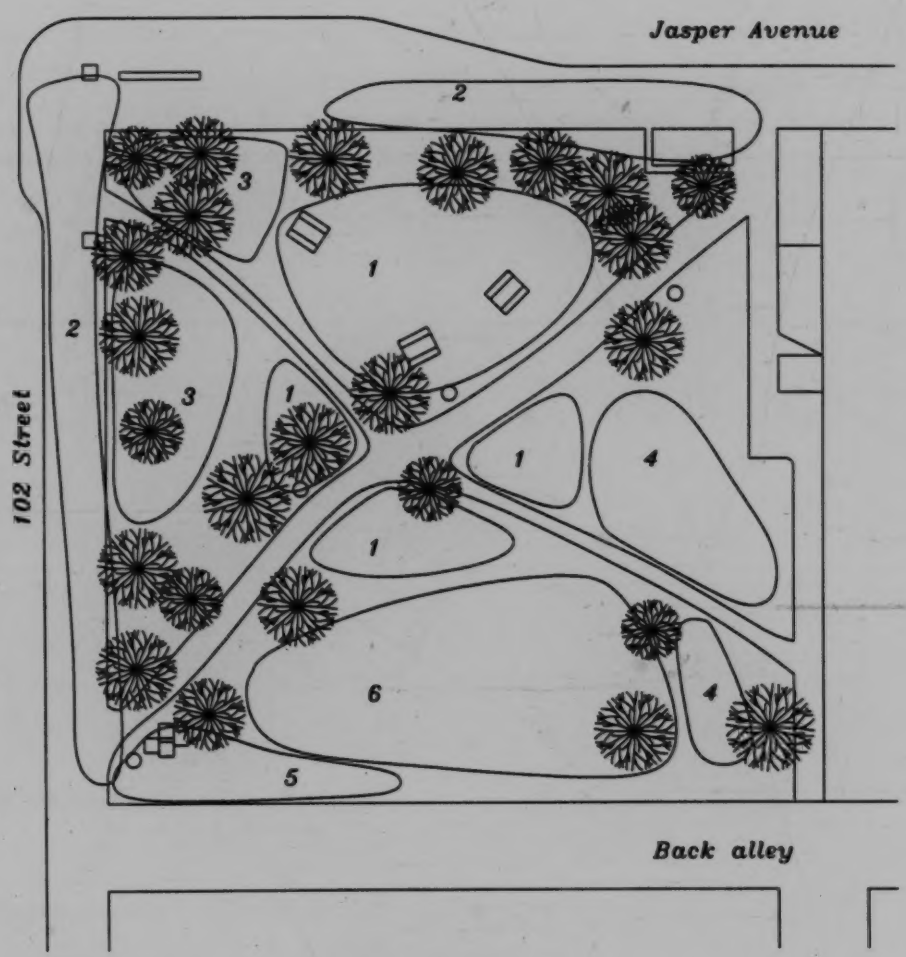
Photo: aerial view of the site from top of parkade at south end of park, winter

Illustration 1e

Photo: view of the site looking southwest from northeast corner, winter

Illustration 2

Areas of established park use



1 Lunch and coffee break area for office people

2 Area used by persons waiting for buses or just lingering

3 Short stay, rest area for younger, more 'unconventional' individuals

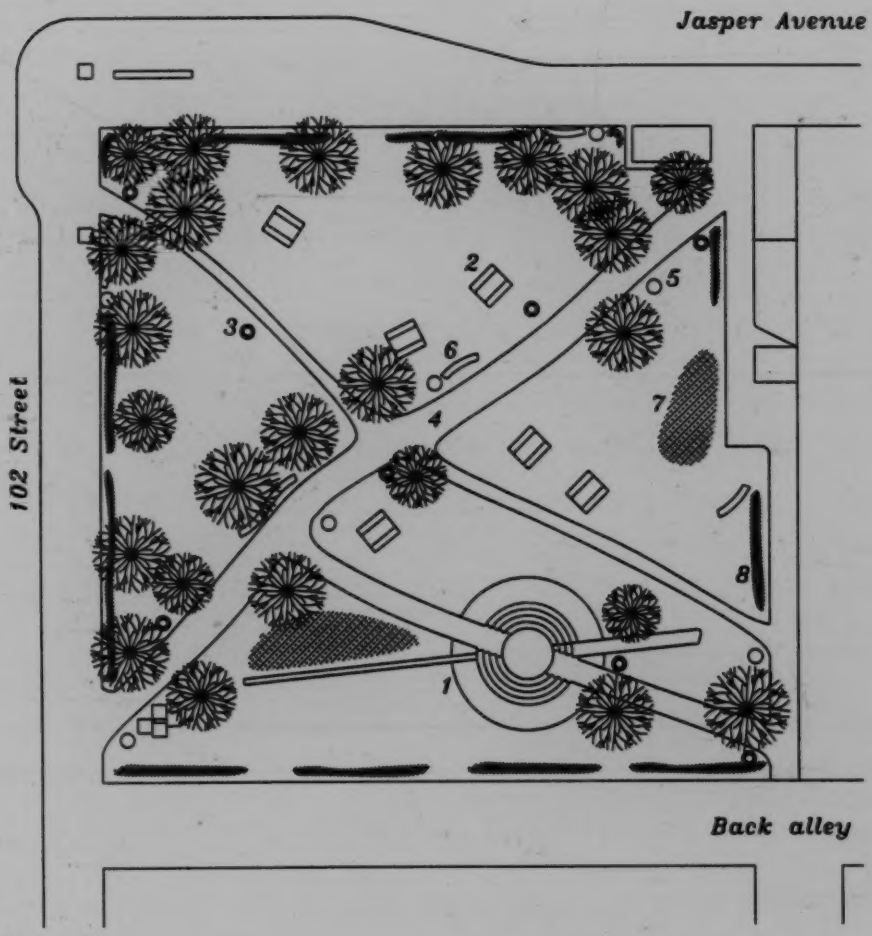
4 Relaxation area – occupied on sunny, hot days when park is crowded (has a good midday shade)

5 Area preferred by individuals seeking more privacy

6 Relaxation, sunbathing and napping area

Illustration 3

The site with proposed changes and additions



1 Amphitheatre *3 Park light* *5 Garbage receptacle* *7 Flower beds*
2 Picnic table *4 Paved path* *6 Bench* *8 Bushes*

Illustrations 4a-b

Photos: Model of amphitheatre structure

Illustration 5

Photo: Model of proposed paving design for hard paths in the park

Illustration 6

Photo: View of current northeast to southwest diagonal path in the park

Illustrations 7a-b

Visual materials presented to participants in the follow-up interviews:
7a Plan of the site with proposed changes and additions, also indicating areas of established use

Visual materials presented to participants in the follow-up interviews:
7b Drawings and photographs indicating problem areas and proposed new elements

Illustrations 8a-b

8a **Drawings illustrating park users' various resting poses as observed in the park**

8b Drawings illustrating park users' various resting poses as observed in the park

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Appendices

Appendix 1
Summary of site observation

1 Visitors and users of the site: general observations

- people working near this site: retail, service, office employees; maintenance, construction workers; bicycle couriers
- less frequent visitors: seniors, transients, teenagers, parents with children, tourists
- office workers start coming to the site after 10:00 a.m.
- single seniors visitors can be seen in the park more often during morning hours and on weekends
- more adolescent school children can be seen crossing the site, or lingering in it, during the school year
- Edmonton Journal daycare groups occasionally come tobogganing in winter time .

2 Patterns and frequency of use (see also Table 1 and 2)

- the park is used primarily on weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
- it is used sparingly in the evenings and on weekends, even if the weather is good
- the temperature and wind have a significant impact on the patterns and frequency of use -

  for example: the total number of people staying in the park during the same period - from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. - on a sunny but rather windy day (August 20, 1996) - was 3; whereas on a comfortably warm day with a light breeze (August 9, 1996) - there were 22
- visitor flow in the morning is quite uneven - the total number of visitors and the length of their stays vary - the flow seems to depend on the weather or the day of the week (more individuals lingering as the weekend approaches)

- the use of the site reaches its peak during the lunch hour rush - on a nice summer day there would be as many as 45 to 50 visitors spending time in the park from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. - the total number of persons staying in the park during any period drops after 1:00 p.m., but the flow remains rather constant right until 5:30 p.m. (on average 20 visitors per hour)

3 Groups and individuals visiting the park (see also Table 2 and 3)

- groups staying in the site outnumber individual visitors from 11:00 a.m. until 2:30 - 3:00 p.m. -
  - for example: the total number of people staying in the park on August 8, 1996 between 12:00 p.m. and 12:30 p.m. was 26; there were 9 groups comprised of 21 individuals, and 3 single visitors
- the most frequently observed type of group was that of two females (28 cases)
  - the following groups were also seen rather consistently: 16 couples of 1 male and 1 female, 12 groups of 2 males, 8 various groups of parents with children (during 14 hours of total observation)
- in the late afternoon single visitors outnumber the groups
  -for example: between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. on August 14, 1996 there were 11 individuals visiting as part of a group and 27 single visitors to the park
- during 13 hours of observation there were 78 groups of visitors in the park comprised of 193 individuals - there were 111 single visitors, constituting approximately one third of the total number of visitors
- single female visitors (60 individuals) slightly outnumbered single male visitors (50 individuals) - single females spending some time in the park made up 21% of the total number of staying visitors - 54% of all people staying in groups were females and 37% were males

- less than 1% of all visitors were teenagers and children
- males constituted 42% of all visitors to the park
- females constituted 58% of all visitors
- on average 22 individuals per hour would spend some time in the park during the period of 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on a summer day

4 Frequent destinations of people crossing the site

- parkade on 102 St. (west side, just south of Jasper Ave.)
- Pastel's cafe
- Royal Bank
- bus stop on 101 St. (beside Edmonton Journal)
- River Valley parks
- Downtown Business Association office
- bus stop on 102 St. (near the edge of park, just south of Jasper Ave.)
- bus stop on Jasper Avenue
- CIBC bank (north west corner of Jasper Ave. at 101 St.)

5 Reasons to cross the site

- go to and from work, when car is parked in the parkade
- go get some change or do daily banking at the Royal Bank, or CIBC (north west corner of Jasper Ave. at 101 St.)
- go for lunch, coffee, smoke to Pastel's cafe
- deliver packages (bicycle couriers, service personnel for DBA and Pastel's)
- to take the garbage from DBA and Pastel's around the corner

- make a shortcut from 101 St. northwest toward Jasper Ave.
- make a shortcut to the bus stop on 101 St. carrying bags of groceries
- to check the garbage for bottles and cans, or panhandle
- ride a bike through (most likely for recreation, toward the River Valley parks)
- walk toward the River Valley area (wearing exercise clothing)
- come to visit the Downtown Information Centre

6 Varying ways to cross the site

- stroll slowly across, smile, look around
- rush through while running some errands
- walk through the site while finishing a drink or food
- walk slowly through the site with a child, and linger briefly
- stroll through the site while keeping up a conversation
- jog through the site
- ride a bicycle

7 Patterns and frequency of crossing of the site

- the flow of people crossing the park is rather constant during the day - it gets lighter after 6.30 p.m.
- the diagonal path connecting the northeast and the southwest corners is used most frequently
- during fall, winter and spring seasons both paths are used less frequently; still, some individuals cross the site despite slippery conditions, snow and mud which often covers the paths

- on average 46 individuals per hour cross the site during business hours
- the most significant fluctuations in numbers of individuals crossing the park were noted at the beginning and end of the work day; the numbers changed most dramatically at coffee breaks during midmorning and mid-afternoon hours, before lunch and after the lunch rush
- the temperature and other weather conditions do not affect the flow of people crossing as drastically as the numbers of people staying in the park, but still do have some affect
- during the lunch hour rush (12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.), as the park fills with people, the flow of individuals crossing the park becomes lighter - I speculate that during this hour most people are already spending their lunch breaks somewhere, and some individuals might choose not to cross the site, exposing themselves to the crowds of brown baggers people-watching as they sit in the park - many instead walk *around* the site

8 What people do while spending some time in the park

8.1 short duration, usually compulsory activities, sometimes developing into slightly longer duration optional activities

- take the garbage out of the garbage cans (maintenance worker)
- check the garbage for metal cans and bottles (transients, seniors)
- walk through, pick up a newspaper somebody left behind, read it while standing (seniors, transients)
- stop for a short rest and/or chat. (bicycle couriers, office employees, persons with grocery bags)
- make a short stop, sit down by a picnic table, look through some papers

- walk the dog
- step out of the building to check the weather, look around (DBA and Pastel's employees)
- stop by the information stand, read the announcements (young people)
- wait for somebody along an edge of the site, looking at the street while waiting
- stop for a moment on the way to some place, rest while standing and leaning on something - a tree, corner of a building, fence bar, planters, picnic table
- stand on the diagonal path or along the perimeter of the site and smoke
- stand, look at the park, stroll across and along it while waiting for the bus
- ask for a change (panhandlers)

8.2 optional activities (at least 15 minutes duration) observed in various areas of the park

- relax and enjoy the sun, greenery, outdoors (office employees)
- meet a friend or colleague and have a chat or talk while drinking something or having a smoke
- spend lunch or coffee break reading, having a drink
- stay in the park and relax with a child (or children)
- sit and watch people in the park
- sit and watch street activity
- put on makeup, sunbathe, or nap in the sun
- find a place where one can be alone, turn one's back to the rest of the park visitors, sit
- meet a friend, family member or a colleague in the park - have a chat, lunch, drink or smoke with them (anticipated and unplanned meetings)
- take off shoes, rest feet while sitting

- stand or sit down in a sun lit area of the park while lingering in the site (usually a morning activity when it is still pretty cool)

8.3 optional activities (at least 15 minutes duration) taking place while sitting at a picnic table

- have lunch, coffee or a cigarette during a break (office employees)
- draw on a picnic table with pieces of gravel (children, teens)
- talk on a cellular phone
- rest while laying on a picnic table bench (office females do this sometimes, but usually when they come with a group)
- hold a casual coffee break meeting by or at one of the picnic tables (regular group of office employees)
- adjust the location of a picnic table for comfort: then sit in shade or sun

9 The ways people act in the park

- I identified varying levels of involvement in conversation when a group of individuals was occupying a picnic table (i.e., group of three: two individuals are very involved in a conversation and the third one is just listening, sits facing the opposite direction)
- groups of individuals where sometimes observing the park and its activity while talking or eating - in these cases they would sit beside each other, talk, and face the park
- in many cases I observed that individuals who come to the park to spend their lunch or coffee break spend the entire duration of the break there (it varies from 45 to 15 minutes) - the actual eating takes about one third of the time, and conversations or relaxing alone, two thirds of this time

- on days with mixed cloud and sun, I noticed that during sunny periods some people sitting in the park turn their faces toward the sun, close their eyes, and smile
- strong cold winds keep people away from the park even during the lunch rush on sunny summer days
- most of Pastel's cafe patio customers observe the park or Jasper Avenue activity
- previously unacquainted individuals who decide to sit at the same picnic table will usually exchange a few sentences before both are seated
- several seniors would come to the site alone during "slow" times, sit by a picnic table close to the street, or even in the bus shelter, and watch Jasper Avenue activity
- some female regular users of the park come to spend their break well prepared: they bring blankets, thermoses, books with them
- it was evident that some couples or groups meet here for lunch - after their stay they would walk away in different directions

10 The ways people sit, stand or lay in the park

- sit at a picnic table which is in the sun (frequently noticed during morning hours)
- sit by the planters enjoying late afternoon sun
- sit in Pastel's patio, right in the area lit by the sun's glare coming off adjacent buildings (noticed in the morning)
- stand by the edge of the site and face either the street or the park
- stand by a picnic table while talking to somebody, rest one knee on a bench, lean toward the table

- one can sit by a picnic table "properly;" sit facing the opposite direction, using the table as a back rest; lay on a bench; or "ride"it
  - picnic tables are sometimes moved to slightly different locations by park visitors (in seeking shade or sun)
  - during "slow" times some individuals would sit *on* a picnic table and watch the street (males), or two would sit facing opposite directions, using the edge of the table as a back rest
  - during the lunch rush some picnic tables could be occupied by two couples or even groups who do not know each other

- occasionally park visitors use the south fence bar to lean on or sit on while facing either north or south
- individuals occupying the hill area of the lawn are two out of three times looking at the park
- when the temperatures reached +21°C or higher, a number of individuals where relaxing on the lawn in "half laying, half sitting" positions, sunbathed, and napped in various reclining positions
- some individuals are intentionally facing south (toward the parkade wall) while resting on the hills (sunbathing, or seeking privacy)
- during busy times individuals occupying the hill area sit approximately 3.5 metres apart
- the distance between individuals and groups staying in the park does decrease during the lunch hour rush (occasionally 1.5 metres apart in some areas)
- the number of individuals seeking shade or sun during hot summer days is divided almost evenly
- some individuals sit on the lawn waiting for a free space at one of the picnic tables - when one becomes vacant, they move there right away

- individuals sitting on the grass are more often dressed casually than the ones at the picnic tables
- young casually dressed males and females (groups or individuals) preferred the north-west shaded area of the site and south-west area by the planters (opportunity to distance themselves from the majority of visitors, for relative privacy)

11 Things to do around the site

- sit on Pastel's Cafe patio
- wait for the bus while walking along the edge of the park and looking at the park
- wait for somebody while standing on the edge of the park and facing the street or the site
- sit in the bus shelter and watch the street activity (seniors)
- check for change in the pay phones along the north side of the park
- put posters on the information board (mostly young adults and teens)
- stop for a minute to read the posters on the information board (young adults, teens)
- use the pay phones
- use the bicycle racks

12 Situations when people intend to use the park, but choose not to

- "target" a picnic table for a short rest while waiting for the bus, but decide to stay closer to the bus stop (possible reasons: picnic table is too far, visibility to the street isn't as good)

- many single visitors of the site (especially elderly) who plan just to sit down (not to eat), seem to be reluctant to "take away" a seat at a picnic table even if one is free
- couples or individuals came to the park with lunches, but there would not be a place to sit at a picnic table - they would look around then leave right away, or stay for a while and wait for a free place to sit down

13 Physical environment of the site

The site is a square lot, 45 metres long and 45 metres wide. The lot is situated on the corner of a downtown block and faces Jasper Avenue to the north and 102 Street to the west. Two bus stops are situated on the edges of the park: one on Jasper Avenue and the other on 102 Street; the former has an elaborate glass shelter with a bench and a pay phone. On the Jasper Avenue sidewalk is an information board, bicycle racks and an Edmonton Sun newspaper box. The east and south sides are bordered respectively by a "stepped" high-rise office building and a multi level parkade. The high-rise's lower section is the part adjacent to the east edge of the park. The parkade's north wall, which faces the park, is quite flat, blank and grey. This is especially noticeable during times when the site is not lit by the sun. The back alley running along the south edge of the park is used by service vehicles and trucks servicing nearby buildings. A single-rail metal fence separates it from the park.

There are three picnic tables, four garbage cans, and a cluster of concrete square flower boxes in the park. The picnic tables are used quite heavily during late spring, summer, and early fall. After several days of dry weather the tables can get covered with sticky film from spills of soft drinks and food. They are moved around slightly each day by the park visitors.

Two diagonal paths cross the site. One of them is covered with red gravel and bordered with rubber trim (southeast to northwest). The other is a rather narrow unpaved

natural "worn"path. There is a drainage problem area in the northeast corner of the site, right beside the entrance to the park and northwest section of the wider diagonal path. A sizeable puddle forms here during the fall, winter and spring seasons. It causes some inconvenience for persons cutting through the site, especially in fall and winter. (see Illustration 1e)

There are two artificial hills on the south side of the site. This area of the park is an open lawn which gets most of the sun light during the day and around the year. Most of the trees are planted on the north side, along the diagonal path and the perimeter of the park. There are thirty trees on the site. Each of them is approximately 15 years old and they are similar in height. They create considerable shade but do not obstruct the view of the site from the street and lower floors of surrounding buildings.

The presence of both natural sun light and shade in this relatively small site is an advantage. The fluctuations of light and shifts in landscape (artificial hills) seem to contribute to the visual variety of the site. It look quite different from various vantage points. Shaded areas on the north and west sides also create a pleasant visual separation of the park from the busy downtown streets. This situation is different during morning hours (7:00 am - 9:30 am). The site is in the shade at that time, and Jasper Avenue is lit by the sun.

14 The sun light (mid-summer observations)

- 9:00 a.m. - most of the site is in the shade, though glare from reflected light off the adjacent high-rise windows does add a little visual variety. Pastel's visitors seem to be targeting these glare patches when they choose seats on the patio
- 9:15 a.m. - Jasper Avenue is brightly lit by the sun. At this time some seniors occupy picnic tables and watch the street
- 9:22 a.m. - the sun reaches the south west corner of the park

- 9:30 a.m. - one quarter of the site is lit by the sun. This is usually the time when the first regular visitors start coming to the park.
- 10:30 a.m. - half of the park is lit by the morning sun
- 11:00 a.m. - two thirds of the site is in the sun light. It stays that way until 5.00 pm in the summer time

15 Analysis of area preferences on the site

15.1 areas of regular use

- the diagonal paths, the bus stops on 102 St. and Jasper Ave. are used during the day and around the year
- Pastel's cafe patio is used by cafe visitors from late spring until mid-fall - 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- the areas in the park occupied for more prolonged periods can be ranked and identified as follows:
  - central section (area with picnic tables)
    - most likely preferred because the picnic tables provide seating
    - it is a partly flexible area - the three picnic tables are moved short distances quite often by park visitors - the tables remain in their basic central location (a flat lawn area with a fairly good mix of sun light and shade cast from park trees) throughout the summer season
    - when the temperatures aren't high enough to allow for comfortable sitting on the grass (this threshold seems to be at +17°C), this is the only area in the park people occupy
  - the south hill area is occupied by visitors when the weather is pleasant but the picnic tables are fully occupied - people sit and lay here freely, in various positions, orientations and possible groupings

- the south west hill area by the planters is often occupied by individuals and couples seeking some privacy - they usually face either the south parkade wall or 102 St.
- the north west area is a shaded cluster of the park (especially the area along 102 St., the north west corner, and the immediate surroundings of the bus stop on Jasper Ave.)

  - individuals observed in this area are usually waiting for busses or otherwise lingering - some younger "unconventional" individuals, teenagers, bicycle couriers, come here for a short rest, chat or smoke.

15.2 areas used least often

- the north east corner (especially the lawn area near the patio and entrance to DBA office), and the east side edge (by the Royal Bank building)

  - there are no benches or other objects to sit on and thereby elevate oneself to the level of the patio seating

  -the windows of the DBA office are fitted on the inside with vertical blinds - those inside the office can easily view individuals in the park, but not the inverse is not true (many park visitors may feel too much exposed to view from the office to relax right in front of these windows)

Appendix 2
Record of patterns of park use

Site Observation: Park on Jasper Avenue and 102 Street, Edmonton

Summary

July 23, 1996 (Tuesday)

Period: 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

comfortably warm, sunny with cloud, right after lunch rush

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

6 males

8 females

2 children

4 groups (2 females - 2 children, 4 females, 1 female - 1 male)

6 singles (5 males, 1 female)

Total: 16

Persons crossing the site:

29 males

25 females

Total: 52

1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

4 males

6 females

3 groups (2 males, 2 females, 1 male - 1 female)

4 singles (1 male, 3 females)

Total: 10

1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m

Persons staying in the park:

3 males

5 females

2 children

2 groups (2 females -2 children, 2 females)

4 singles (3 males, 1 female)

Total: 10

Persons crossing the site:

7 males

4 females

Total: 11

1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

7 males

11 females

2 children

5 groups (2 of 2 females, 2 males, 2 females - 2 children, 1 male - 1 female)

8 singles (8 males, 8 females)

Total: 20

2:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

3 males

3 females

2 groups (1 male - 1 female, 2 females)

2 singles (2 males)

Total: 6

Persons crossing the site:

22 males

21 females

Total: 43

2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

2 males

4 females

2 children

3 groups (1 male - 1 female, 2 of 1 female - 1 child)

2 singles (1 male, 1 female)

Total: 8

Persons crossing the site:

19 males

13 females

1 child

Total: 33

July 24, 1996 (Wednesday)

Period: 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

comfortably warm, sunny

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

6 males

11 females

5 children (3 children, 2 teenagers)

6 groups (3 of 2 females, 2 males, 1 female - 3 children, 2 teenagers)

8 singles (4 males, 4 females)

Total: 22

Persons crossing the site:

26 males

30 females

5 children (3 children, 2 teenagers)

Total: 61

2:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

1 male

11 females

5 children (3 children, 2 teenagers)

5 groups (3 of 2 females, 1 female - 3 children, 2 teenagers)

5 singles (1 male, 4 females)

Total: 17

Persons crossing the site:

9 males

16 females

5 children (2 children, 3 teenagers)

Total: 27

2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

4 males

1 group (2 males)

3 singles (3 males)

Total: 5

Persons crossing the site:

17 males

14 females

Total: 31

August 7, 1996 (Wednesday)

Period: 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

cool, but sunny from 9.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m.

9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Persons staying in the park:

4 males

1 female

1 group (1 male - 1 female)

3 singles (3 males)

Total: 5

Persons crossing the site:

38 males

27 females

Total: 65

9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Persons staying in the park:

1 male

1 single (1 male)

Total: 1

Persons crossing the site:

14 males

18 females

Total: 32

10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Persons staying in the park:

3 males

1 female

1 group (1 male - 1 female)

2 singles (2 males)

Total: 4

Persons crossing the site:

23 males

10 females

Total: 33

10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Persons staying in the park:

3 males

1 teenager

1 group (2 males)

2 singles (1 male, 1 teenager)

Total: 4

Persons crossing the site:

5 males

18 females

1 teenager

Total: 24

11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Persons staying in the park:

1 male

3 females

1 group (2 females)

2 singles (1 male, 1 female)

Total: 4

Persons crossing the site:

12 males

8 females

6 children (4 children, 2 teenagers)

Total: 26

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Persons staying in the park:

6 males

1 female

1 teenager

2 groups (2 males, 1 male - 1 female)

4 singles (3 males, 1 teenager)

Total: 8

Persons crossing the site:

28 males

38 females

1 teenager

Total: 57

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

just before lunch rush

Persons staying in the park:

4 males

3 females

1 teenager

2 groups (2 males, 2 females)

4 singles (2 males, 1 female, 1 teenage)

Total: 8

Persons crossing the site:

16 males

26 females

8 children (4 children, 4 teenagers)

Total: 50

11:00 am - 12:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

5 males

17 females

4 children

7 groups (2 of 1 male - 1 female, 2 of 2 females, 4 females, 3 females, 1 male - 1 female - 4 children)

5 singles (2 males, 3 females)

Total: 26

Persons crossing the site:

24 males

10 females

6 children (4 children, 2 teenagers)

Total: 40

August 8, 1996 (Thursday)

Period: 11:50 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

weather is very good - sunny, +22-23℃, light breeze -

at 12.50 p.m. - there were 15 people staying in the park

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

18 males

23 females

3 children

14 groups (6 of 2 females, 3 of 1 male - 1 female, 2 of 2 males, 3 females, 6 males, 1 female - 1 child, 1 male - 1 female - 2 children)

7 singles (4 males, 3 females)

Total: 44

Persons crossing the site:

12 males

9 females

2 children (1 child, 1 teenage)

Total: 23

12:00 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

11 males

14 females

1 child

9 groups (4 of 2 females, 6 males, 3 females, 2 males, 1 female - 1 child, 1 male - 1 female)

3 singles (2 males, 1 female)

Total: 26

Persons crossing the site:

11 males

7 females

1 child

Total: 19

12:30 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

7 males

9 females

2 children

6 groups (2 of 1 male - 1 female, 2 of 2 females, 1 female - 1 male - 2 children, 2 males)
4 singles (2 males, 2 females)
Total: 18

August 9, 1996 (Friday)
Period: 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
comfortably warm, +24℃, light breeze

11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Persons staying in the park:
4 males
14 females
4 children
6 groups (2 of 1 male - 1 female, 4 females, 3 females, 2 females, 1 male - 1 female - 4 children)
3 singles (1 male, 2 females)
Total: 22
Persons crossing the site:
12 males
2 females
Total: 14

12:00 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Persons staying in the park:
6 males
23 females
10 groups (6 of 2 females, 3 of 1 male - 1 female, 2 males)
9 singles (1 male, 8 females)
Total: 29

12:30 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

7 males

11 females

5 groups (2 of 2 males, 1 male - 3 females, 1 male - 1 female, 4 females)

4 singles (1 male, 3 females)

Total: 18

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

12.20 p.m. - there were 21 people staying in the park (17 females).

Persons staying in the park:

13 males

34 females

15 groups (6 of 2 females, 3 of 2 males, 4 of 1 male - 1 female, 4 females, 3 females - 1 male)

12 singles (3 males, 11 females)

Total: 47

August 11, 1996 (Sunday)

Period: 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

a quiet and sunny Sunday afternoon

Persons staying in the park:

2 males

2 children

1 group (2 children)

2 singles (2 males)

Total: 4

Persons crossing the site:

4 males

4 children (teenage)

Total: 8

August 13, 1996 (Tuesday)

Period: 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. - most of the site was in the shade; it is still rather cool for sitting outside

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Persons staying in the park:

10 males

2 groups (4 males, 3 males)

3 singles (3 males)

Total: 10

Persons crossing the site:

23 males

7 females

Total: 30

9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Persons staying in the park:

9 males

2 groups (4 males, 3 males)

2 singles (2 males)

Total: 9

Persons crossing the site:

10 males

4 females

Total: 14

9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Persons staying in the park:

1 male

1 single (1 male)

Total : 1

Persons crossing the site:

13 males

3 females

Total: 16

10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Persons staying in the park:

2 males

2 females

1 child

1 group (1 female - 1 child)

3 single (2 males, 1 female)

Total: 5

Persons crossing the site:

11 males

4 females

Total: 15

August 14, 1996 (Wednesday)

Period: 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

warm, sunny

3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

14 males

6 females

1 group (7 males)

13 singles (7 males, 6 females)

Total: 20

3:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

10 males

5 females

1 group (7 males)

8 singles (3 males, 5 females)

Total: 15

3:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

4 males

1 female

5 singles (4 males, 1 female)

Total: 5

4:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

2 males

4 females

6 singles (2 males, 4 females)

Total: 6

4:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

4 males

8 females

2 groups (1 male - 1 female, 2 females)

8 singles (3 males, 5 females)

Total: 12

4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

6 males

11 females

2 groups (1 male - 1 female, 2 females)

14 singles (5 males, 9 females)

Total: 18

August 15, 1996 (Thursday)

Period: 2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

12 males

5 females

4 groups (2 of 2 females, 5 males, 2 males)

6 singles (5 males, 1 female)

Total: 17

August 20, 1996 (Tuesday)

Period: 11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

sunny, but very windy, rather uncomfortable to sit outside

Persons staying in the park:

1 male

2 females

3 singles (1 male, 2 females)

Total: 3

August 27, 1996 (Tuesday)

Period: 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

very warm, +30℃, light wind

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

15 males

34 females

13 groups (5 of 2 females, 3 of 2 males, 2 of 1 male - 1 female, 4 females, 3 females, 3 males)

19 singles (4 males, 15 females)

Total: 49

12:00 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

9 males

22 females

9 groups (3 of 2 females, 2 of 2 males, 2 of 1 male - 1 female, 4 females, 3 females)

10 singles (3 males, 7 females)

Total: 31

12.20 p.m. - all picnic tables are occupied (each by more than 2 individuals)

12.20 p.m. - 16 individuals are occupying the hill area, 5 males and 11 females.

2.15 p.m. - 11 individuals are occupying the hill area, 5 singles and 3 couples

12:30 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Persons staying in the park:

6 males

12 females

4 groups (2 of 2 females, 3 males, 2 males)

9 singles (1 male, 8 females)

Total: 18

12.40 p.m. - there are 6 groups in the shade (and 10 individuals), 10 groups in the sun (and 13 individuals).

Fourteen hours of observation time was covered in these notes.

Appendix 3

First ethnographic interviews: questions and summary of responses

1 Questions for the first phase of interviews

1 What do you like about this place?

2 What do you not like here?

3 When compared to other open places downtown what do you find is different here? (Any unique features?)

4 How often do you pass or go through this place?

5a Do you ever spend time in the park? Yes __ No__

5b If yes, what do you do there?

6a Do you ever spend time near the park? Yes__ No__

6b If yes, what do you do there?

7 What would you like to be able to do in the park?

8 What could this open area be used for?

9a How often do you use similar urban parks?

9b For what reasons?

10a How safe or vulnerable do you feel in the park throughout the day?

10b Why?

11 What are your impressions of the park during different seasons?

12a Would you like to see anything added to the park? Yes__ No__

12b If yes, what and why?

2 Summary of the information gathered from the first phase of ethnographic interviews

2.1 About the interviewees:

I interviewed persons of various ages and occupations. Of the 40 interviewees 17 were females and 23 were males. The average age of people interviewed was approximately 32. This closely reflected the average age of frequent park visitors observed on the site.

One common criteria for the interviewees was their familiarity with the site (they have used the park, spent some time near by; or work near by). A large percentage of the individuals interviewed was employed in service and retail positions (42%). Some of them were long time employees and knew the area very well; others were young, new, part time or temporary employees. I have also approached lower and middle level office, security and reception employees (40%). The other major group included high-level office managers, professionals, and small business owners (18%). A smaller number of the interviewed individuals was directly involved in management, upkeep and surveillance of the park (police officer, office representative, cafe manager).

2.2 Responses and information gathered from interviewees (by question):

1 What do you like about this place?

- greenery was enjoyed by 22 individuals: i.e.: place to be reminded of nature; trees: like umbrellas, well kept, look "neat," just about blocks out the buildings; greenery, grass: reasonably well kept

- some individuals enjoyed: the hill; narrow and natural paths; a bus stop which is good to have next to the park (the park is a nice place to wait); a little wildlife: squirrels and birds; comfortable mix of shade and sun
- the park's particular role as a green space in the middle of downtown was noted by 15 individuals: i.e.: a green area, a break between the buildings; a little greenery in the middle of the city; a good location for a green area; "outside" area in the middle of a high traffic area; the park right downtown; "haven in the midst of the craziness of do5wntown;" piece of nature in the city; it's green, "not the concrete that surrounds us;" an oasis from the office hustle; pleasant break from the concrete around
  - interviewees who noted this feature were also quite articulate and creative in describing the contrast between the peaceful natural surroundings and the urban "concrete" environment
- the park's convenient location, proximity to amenities and work place, accessibility was mentioned by 15 individuals
- the park as well maintained, fairly clean was noted by 8 individuals
- the site as a place to enjoy and observe social interaction was noted by 12 individuals

2 What do you not like here?

- 8 individuals have perceived some safety problems related to presence of street people: loitering kids, some prostitution, "seedy characters," "troublemakers," "gangs," "bums," "losers" - nevertheless the presence of these individuals was described more as an annoyance than a serious threat
  - the inevitability of some social problems was recognized by some interviewees: "like anywhere in a large city's downtown there are some gangs and drugs in the park in the evenings"

- lack of paved paths, park furniture was noted by many
- especially - a shortage of benches was noted by 8 individuals
- not enough landscaping - lack of trees, shrubs, and flowers which would add some colour, and/or care of current landscaping was a problem for 6 individuals
- 5 interviewees thought that park in not clean enough
- 7 individuals stated there was nothing they particularly liked here

3 When compared to other open places downtown what do you find different here (any unique features)?

- 12 individuals could not identify anything unique or different about this place, i.e.: "we take it for granted"
- the lack of care, development (landscaping, etc.), "action" or organized activities was noted by 6 individuals as a feature specific to the site
- the vegetation in the park was noted by 7 interviewees as a special feature (especially "lush trees")
- 9 individuals described this park's special role as a "place to have peace and get your head together," as a place "tucked away," "out of the way," "open, yet still secluded (a good balance)," "a quiet place," "more a place for quiet sitting and eating"
- the site's physical - spatial qualities were identified as different by 8 individuals, i.e.: "open," "small," "lush trees hide the bareness of the park," "has a parkade behind which is not very tall," "more tucked away than others," "open space, yet sheltered by the trees"

4 How often do you pass or go through this place?

- 9 individuals pass or cross the site occasionally (less than twice a week)
- the rest, 31, or 77% of interviewees, pass or cross the site almost daily
- the reasons to do so were: "a good short cut for errands downtown," "moved into an office nearby," "to get to Pastel's cafe," "to get to the office," "pass when going for a walk," "to go to the bank," "to go to the carpark - like many others do," "to deliver letters," "to walk through with friends"

5a Do you ever spend time in the park?

5b If yes, what do you do there?

- 14 persons interviewed do not stop to spend any time in the park
- 19 or almost 50% of individuals questioned do spend some time in the park: half of these people come for lunch or a drink, most of them pair eating with relaxation, "vegetating" and enjoying the outdoors (9 individuals)
- other reasons to stay in the park were: "to do some paper work," "to write poetry," "to toboggan with children in winter," bring kids on Saturdays, walk the dog

6a Do you ever spend time near the park?

6b If yes, what do you do there?

- most people who spend any time nearby go to Pastel's or other cafes (10 individuals)
- other reasons to be nearby were: waiting for the bus, walking to and from places (mall, a bank, office, the REV Cabaret)

7 What would you like to be able to do in the park?

- 10 interviewees wished to be able to eat comfortably and/or buy some food and drinks from vendors here
- 6 people said they would like to see some entertainment, concerts and programs here
- 17 individuals clearly wanted to relax in this park - they described this park as a place to: "veg or meditate," "sit back and relax," "not worry what other people think of you," "have some visual and physical separation from busy traffic," "find some peace," "lie down and not to be bothered," "unwind, release stress"
- I noted in responses a clear split in preferred ways to relax or enjoy this space: 18 individuals showed a clear preference for "passive," quiet relaxation; 9 interviewees clearly wanted to be entertained, to observe some activity around, or interact

8 What could this open area be used for?

- every interviewed individual stressed the importance of retaining the site for use as a park - "save it for outdoor enjoyment downtown."
- 8 people suggested particular physical changes and additions to the park to enhance it -among these suggestions were: apparatus and swings for kids, a wading pool, food vending, a fountain, bar-b-ques, more greenery
- 10 individuals suggested some activities be fostered and facilitated in the park:
  - it could be: a festival site; a music venue for bands; a place for multicultural events, plays, shows and promotions; an area for some games or sports events; a quiet space for reading; a place for sitting and being alone; a semi-permanent spot for food vending for people who are waiting for busses

9a How often do you use similar urban parks?

9b For what reasons?

- 12 individuals (30%) use similar sites occasionally: once a week or so
- 17 interviewed persons, or 42% of total interviewees, stated that they spend time in parks and open public spaces often: from a few times per week to daily visits
- 11 people use similar places infrequently

- Churchill Square, Beaver Hills Park, MacKay Park, Gazebo Park, the 100 Ave. strip overlooking the river valley, the Legislature Grounds and the river valley were mentioned as the most frequent sites visited downtown
  - the reasons to go to these parks, and preferred activities were: entertainment during major events and festivals; listening to some music; going for First Night festivities; skating or watching skaters; taking children to the fountain on warm days (Churchill); cooling down during lunch breaks near the fountain (Legislature Grounds); people-watching; taking a walk; biking or running through the river valley; looking at the river valley and what's happening on the south side; sitting and eating lunch; meeting people; walking the dog; for dinner-dates (eating take out food there); just getting out of the office; soaking up some sun or relaxing in the shade; skateboarding; playing hackysack; watching girls (a male teenager)
- interviewees' preferred activities in neighbourhood parks included: walking the dog, picnicking, playing soccer, biking, sitting in the sun, just walking around with a child, or taking a walk on a nice evening

10 How safe or vulnerable do you feel in the park throughout the day?

- 34 individuals (85%) were quite sure they felt safe in the park during the day
- 19 thought it's safe because of the physical features of the park: its good visibility, good sightline of activities taking place inside and outside, openness, small size, absence of hidden corners, nearby businesses' doors and windows on the park
- the presence of other people: in the park, crossing the site and along Jasper Ave. makes 16 individuals feel safer
- 3 females out of 17 interviewed did not feel entirely safe during the day - 2 of them explained that they "get bothered by people sometimes, but not threatened"- they would sometimes avoid going to the park if they see "street people" there
- some females said they do feel safe because:
  - they are familiar with the area
  - they do not think it's a seedy part of town
  - they are used to common problems downtown
  - they do not think that people picking some garbage cans in the park pose any threat
- one of the females who generally felt safe in the park thought that the site and the area would be safer and friendlier if there were more children around
- 3 out of 23 males stated that they do not feel very safe in the park - reasons included: "sometimes one's peace gets disrupted by loitering drunks," or they had "had one bad experience in the past"
- people felt less safe around this park during the evening and night hours compared with day time
- 5 out of 17 females interviewed did not feel safe at all in the park, 5 other females felt somewhat unsafe, 7 females felt safe here in the evening and at night (41%)

- 10 males out of 23 interviewed felt safe there anytime of the day or night (43%), 4 males did not feel at all safe here in the evening, 9 males felt somewhat unsafe
- the most frequently stated reason for the park being, or seeming, less safe in the evening was that there are "different kinds of users in evening" - young people wanting to start problems, people asking for money, selling drugs
- lack of sufficient lighting during dark periods of the day was noted as a possible contributing factor to some seedy activities occurring on the site, and perceptions of the place being unsafe

- some individuals mentioned that they don't feel safe because of the "stigma of downtown at night"
- some particular areas of the site were mentioned as especially unsafe at night: the areas away from the path and the southeast corner near parkade

- some of the statements made by individuals who felt safe here all the time were:
  - this is one of the safest parks in the city
  - there are fewer social problems here than in other downtown parks
  - there isn't much activity between 19:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m.
  - police patrol regularly
- Constable Rob Mills often patrols this area - he noted that:
  - this park is not a high-crime area
  - police need a clear view and good lighting to be more effective in surveillance
  - police often observe the park from the south alley
  - the bus shelter cuts some view from the sidewalk

11 What are your impressions of the park during different seasons?

- all but one individual (who did not notice any changes) agreed that this park is used mostly in summer by local employees and tourists
- most described this park as a "nice place to be"
- many mentioned that they see school-age kids play ball there, people walking their dogs, teenagers suntanning and playing hackysack, and/or office people eating their lunches and sitting on the grass (some bring towels)
- many interviewees also admit that in the summer they "stroll through it, but hurry straight across in the winter time"; or "walk by it more slowly in summer"
- most of the individuals interviewed agreed that the park is used very lightly or not used at all in the winter time
  - some claimed it looks "bleak" in winter, it's "ignored by many," "people only pass through," "it is harder to walk through it," or "it's not shovelled well enough"
  - some interviewees noticed daycare kids tobogganing in the park, an occasional smoker on a break or a street person sleeping on a bench there
  - several people admitted that they liked the park in winter too, especially the snow on the trees
  - one person admitted that "there is not much opportunity for recreation in the winter" . . . "mostly because of scale, and again, because it is an unprogramed, passive park"
- during fall and spring seasons this park was considered a nice place to walk through and to look at: "it's pretty in fall . . . the leaves bring character to the park;" "very nice"
  - aside from the major factor keeping people away from the park in spring and in fall - temperature, several individuals saw poor drainage (especially on the east side of the park) as a problem

12a Would you like to see anything added to the park?

12b If yes, what and why?

- all 40 individuals interviewed had some suggestions for additions to the park
- 23 people felt there was a need for more seating: more benches, chairs, picnic tables; and some suggested "other places to sit" (likely some secondary seating), and/or "temporary seating" (for viewing performances, other entertainment)
  - some interviewees had noticed that "some workers go there at lunch, finds no place to sit, and leave"or "half the people don't use the park because they can't sit on the grass in their work clothes"
  - a few particular suggestions for the placement of the seating were given: along the diagonal path; give some choice between shade and sun; also benches by the bus stop on 102 St. would be an asset
  - according to some interviewees, these benches should look "nicer," be sturdy and, (about the picnic tables especially), should have "some tiling" under (easy to clean, looks good)
- 13 individuals would like to see some entertainment in the park - it could take place in summer and in winter as well
  - a place for summer festivals, concerts; Fringe plays; a "little plaza for street performers"; "something to amuse people."
  - some interviewed individuals suggested a stage even if it's small, "a little plaza," a "platform for bands," or some "recesses, areas set back from the sidewalk for performances"
  - the park is a possible site for "winter activity like downtown lighting, First Night;" a site for "ice sculpture display," some "winter carnivals"; "a better slope for tobogganing for children"

- 15 interviewees wanted better landscaping in the park: some greenery, more trees and shrubs, flowers in the park; fill the "patchy grass," and/or add some "hard landscaping"
  - greenery was clearly important to individuals interviewed - many of them described landscaping and plants for the park as something: "noticeable, attractive"; "for beauty"; "for colour"; "some prettiness"
  - there were also practical suggestions made regarding adding more greenery to the park: plants and trees should be "sturdy"; "some more shade" could be created; "block that plain south wall (the parkade)," or "spruce trees would look nice in winter, especially on the south side"

- a food concession was another popular suggestion - 14 interviewees said they would like to see "portable" food vendors there during lunch hours, an ice cream stand, concession service, some vendors, and/or a coffee shop which would be open for bicyclists in the evening
  - several of them mentioned the previously removed ice cream stand, and wished that something similar would be reappearing on the site
- 4 individuals suggested improving lighting in the park
- 3 mentioned the importance of some "visual or physical" separation of the park area from the busy street traffic and back alley - individuals suggested some "pole fence, something minimal," or "a hedge" along the sidewalks
- the addition of some children's playground equipment, a slope for tobogganing, an area for crafts, and/or a wading pool were suggested by 4 individuals
- among other less frequent suggestions were: a mural on the parkade wall, a statue, and more police surveillance

Appendix 4
Second ethnographic interviews: questions and summary of responses

1 Questions for the second phase of interviews

1 Which are the proposed changes that you like best?

2a Which are the changes that you do not like, or think are inappropriate?

2b Can you explain why you do not support them?

3 In your opinion, which changes will affect other people visiting the park, or passing the park, and how?

4 Would the proposed changes make the park a safer or a more dangerous place? Why?

5a Would *you* come more often to the park if these changes were made?

5b If yes, what do you expect to do there?

6 Do you think that if the proposed changes were made, more people would use the park year round? Or in particular seasons? Why?

7a Would you like this place to be a green, quiet area of the downtown, or a centre of some public activity?

7b Do you think it could serve both purposes? How?

2 Summary of the information gathered from the second phase of ethnographic interviews

2.1 About the interviewees and the interviews:

Ten individuals (five males and five females) were interviewed and asked to express their thoughts, opinions and suggestions regarding the proposed design transformations in the park at Jasper Avenue and 102 Street. Each of them was interviewed in the summer

of 1996 and was familiar with the place and with the focus and goals of the case study. Interviewees were presented with visual information showing proposed design transformations, and a park plan indicating defined areas of established use. (see Illustrations 7a-b) The plan of the park also indicated the proposed layout of an infrastructure, objects and landscaping which might enhance the site for activities desired by current users, and attract more people. Some of the designed elements were presented in greater detail: the amphitheatre, lighting, paving of the path and seating fixtures.

2.2 Responses and information gathered from interviewees (by question):

1 Which are the proposed changes that you like best?

- the proposed seating, lighting and amphitheatre structures were most frequently the best liked changes to the park
- the amphitheatre was appreciated as it would accommodate some entertainment in the park
  - the stair system was interpreted as "pleasing to the eye"
  - it was often seen as a stage and platform where concerts, theatrical productions, rallies and other activities could take place
  - it was described as being able to seat a lot of people
- interviewees noted that the proposed park lighting would be necessary to ensure a safe atmosphere in the park
  - some individuals suggested lighting the amphitheatre in the evening to enhance the aesthetic effect and "spotlight" potential formal or informal evening performances
- the idea of "interlocking" paving of the paths was appreciated and expected to provide easier access to and through the park (many remarked on the importance of wheelchair access)

- all individuals liked the general layout - a few remarked that the "the overall view" was (happily) different from the "square buildings all around"

2a Which are the changes that you do not like, or think are inappropriate?

2b Can you explain why you do not support them?

- participants had some suggestions regarding the realisation of the proposed design transformations, and further maintenance which would reduce safety and usage problems:
  - adding shrubbery along the sides of the park was considered a good idea, though some interviewees advised that it be kept low enough that it does not block the view into the park
  - gaps in the shrub line along the back alley were suggested: "break it up, keep the sightlines, don't give places for people to hide or lie behind"
  - some individuals noted that attention to a regular year round cleanup was important, as was keeping the flowerbeds from "getting too muddy"
  - it would also be advisable to maintain (clear) the paths for easier wheelchair access and safe walking in the winter

3 In your opinion, which changes will affect other people visiting the park, or passing the park, and how?

- all interviewed individuals agreed that the proposed seating arrangement would attract more people to the park to have lunch or spend a break, and "to stop by when there is entertainment"
- the proposed paved paths would make passing through easier, and more people might stop, sit down and stay longer in the park

- the lighting and the amphitheatre activities would deter much antisocial behaviour or loitering, as would the increased use and spectrum of users
- the park, according to interviewees, would be more accessible for people in wheelchairs and ("unfortunately," one participant noted), for skateboarders
- a broader range of individuals and groups of people might be using the park
  - most interviewees do not believe this would be problematic: "lots of different groups of people use the park now too, and they seem to get along all right"
  - participants believed that the advantages of increased use outweighed any potential disadvantages

4 Would the proposed changes make the park a safer or a more dangerous place? Why?

- interviewed individuals anticipated that the proposed changes would enhance the perception of, and actual, safety in the park, providing the park is properly maintained
  - safety, according to interviewees, will be further ensured by the addition of lighting
  - the slightly more extensive, wider and smoother paths will allow for an easier escape from problem situations
  - if the "hedges are kept low, well lit and broken in line" the visibility should remain good even with proposed changes (it will "still be open to view")
  - the increased number of expected users will make the park safer during the day as well as in the evening
- according to one of participants, some social problems are unavoidable in such a park, as they are everywhere downtown, and cannot be completely eliminated

5a Would you come to the park more often if these changes were made?

5b If yes, what do you expect to do there?

- all interviewees answered that they would visit the park more often
- the given reasons for this were:
  - the park would look more pleasant
  - the park would be more comfortable and safer
  - there would be more places for sitting
  - there would sometimes be entertainment or something "going on"
- one of the participants mentioned that the park would become the best alternative for outdoor relaxation nearby
- interviewees saw themselves doing the same things they usually do in similar situations and places: having lunch, reading a book, relaxing, getting some sun, spending a break, and bringing children to run around the park

6 Do you think that if the proposed changes were made, more people would use the park year round? Or in particular seasons? Why?

- according to people interviewed, the changes to the park would result in more extensive use in summer, spring and fall
- few held out much hope for frequent winter use (cold temperatures and costly snow removal seem to be big obstacles for wide use of downtown parks in winter)
  - nevertheless, most of the participants suggested organizing special winter events in the amphitheatre area to attract more people and "brighten up the downtown"- as one of the interviewees remarked: "more people will attract more people"
- in general, interviewees agreed that the types of use which are already established are important to maintain, but use could become more frequent or extensive

7a Would you like this place to be a green, quiet area of the downtown, or a centre of some public activity?

7b Do you think it could serve both purposes? How?

- nine out of ten participants stated that the proposed design could accommodate both types of activities
- many mentioned that keeping entertainment concentrated around the amphitheatre would permit mixed, concurrent use of the park
  - some quiet relaxation in areas of the park away from noise, and away from Jasper Avenue, would still be possible
- interviewees agreed that the park currently serves both kinds of activities at different times, and at the same time
- different areas of established use, and the separation of sections provided by the paths, explains how both kinds of activity can continue to occur in the park

Appendix 5

Related case studies

Mechanics Plaza, Zellerbach Plaza, Justin Herman Plaza, Union Square (San Francisco, California)

2. *Mechanics Plaza: Street Plaza—Corner Sun Pocket*[2]

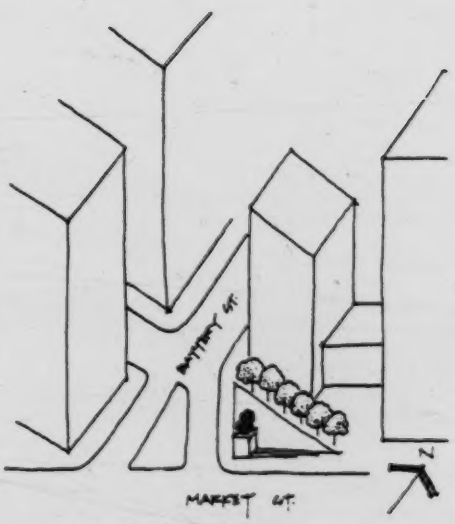
Location and Context

Located at the intersection of Market and Battery streets in downtown San Francisco, Mechanics Plaza is a small, three-sided street plaza. Its design is simple, consisting of three rows of benches, oversized bollards, and the Mechanics statue. Unrestricted access to the plaza is provided from both street sidewalks. The third side of the plaza is the Imperial Bank building.

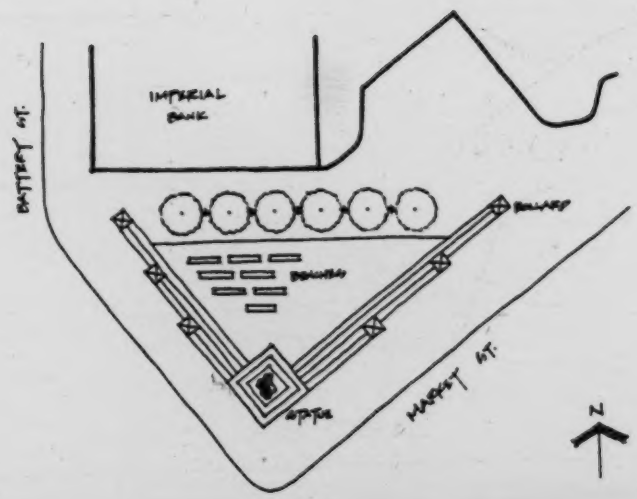
Description

Mechanics Plaza is open to view, receives good sun and reflected light, and is designed as one open area. Although the plaza can be easily entered along Market

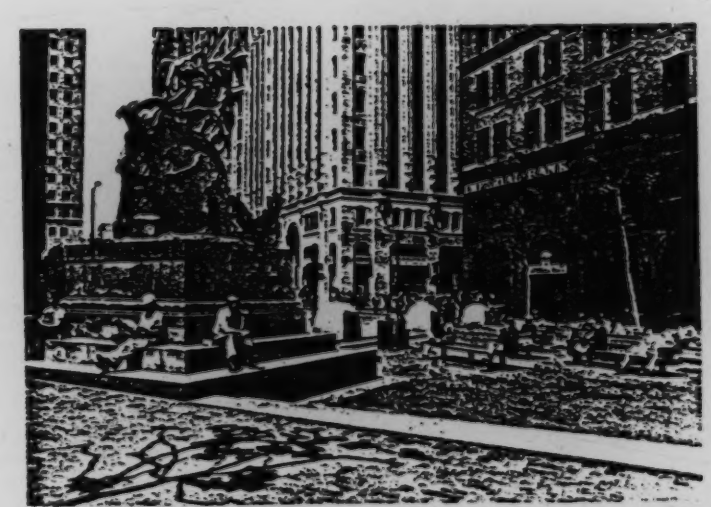
[2] Compiled from reports written by students Holly Duback (1980) and Sandra Wendel (1980).



Location of Mechanics Plaza, San Francisco



Site plan of Mechanics Plaza, San Francisco.



Mechanics Plaza near the end of lunch hour on a warm spring day. (Photo: Robert Russell)

and Battery streets, it is physically defined as a distinct area by a minor step-down level change and a variation in paving materials on the plaza floor. In addition, several large bollards along the plaza edge define the sidewalk/plaza boundary without blocking the users' views of the street activity. A drinking fountain is located on the Market Street sidewalk. Within the plaza are several parallel rows of wooden benches with backrests, all oriented toward the statue and the street. The benches are the most-used area on the plaza. Their backrest construction and uniform orientation, however, discourage group social interaction. Additional seating is provided on a ledge at the base of the statue. The statue gives the plaza a dominant focal point but blocks the sight line from the benches to the sidewalk intersection. A row of trees softens the visual transition between the plaza and the Imperial Bank building and creates a circulation path for pedestrians passing behind the benches. Night lighting is provided.

On the sidewalk next to the plaza is a bus stop and a row of street trees that help mitigate the somewhat stark appearance of this open space. Pigeons are abundant in this plaza, as indicated by the droppings that stain the paving, benches, and sculpture.

Major Uses and Users

The users of Mechanics Plaza come from a wide variety of economic and cultural backgrounds. As with all downtown plazas, its use is highest during lunchtime when the brown baggers arrive. Office and construction workers arriving in small groups or alone are the dominant users. Men slightly outnumber women.

"Undesirables" are occasionally seen sleeping on the benches and rummaging through the trash cans but do not seem to bother anyone. A fourth user group consists of "resters" who use portions of the plaza for waiting or resting for brief periods before moving on. Other than the "undesirables," the users stayed for an average of twenty minutes. Because of its proximity to downtown pedestrian circulation, Mechanics Plaza functions nicely as a street-side, drop-in, short-duration use area.

Eating, reading, talking, and people watching are the dominant plaza activities. Most users sit on the wooden benches, except for the construction workers who tend to sit on the statue ledge facing the street.

Successful Features

- Ease of circulation
- Proximity to street and sidewalk activity
- Solar access
- Statue as focal point
- Separation of plaza space from sidewalk
- Water fountain on sidewalk
- Accessible to disabled people

Unsuccessful Features

- Accumulation of pigeon droppings
- Lack of adequate seating variety and orientation
- Bollards not usable for seating

3. *Zellerbach Plaza: Corporate Foyer—the Impressive Forecourt*[3]

Location and Context

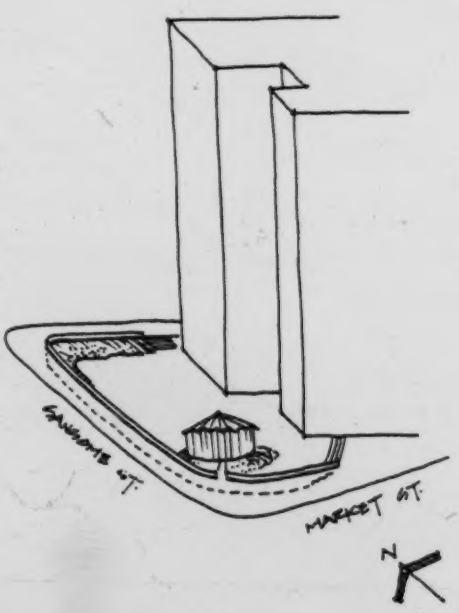
Located on Sansome Street, between Market and Bush streets in the San Francisco financial district, Zellerbach Plaza consists of four main subareas, including a peripheral ledge, a sunken plaza (comprising the bulk of the overall plaza), an inner terrace, and a stepped entryway seating area. The Zellerbach Building forms the north edge of the plaza, and a one-story round retail building is located in the eastern plaza area. Three main access walkways lead into the main sunken plaza, although none creates an obvious sense of entry. The street-level buildings in the adjacent blocks are primarily financial.

[3] Compiled from reports written by students Sandra Wendel (1980) and Trudy Wischemann (1980).

Description

Zellerbach Plaza comprises four distinct but visually connected spaces. The peripheral ledge seat wall along Sansome Street is heavily used owing to its height, width, sunny location, and access to the Sansome Street sidewalk–street activity. A small street-level node extends the peripheral wall into and overlooking the main sunken plaza area and provides a gathering area for people out of the pedestrian flow along the sidewalk. Another peripheral wall along Market Street is in an ideal location to attract sitters, but it is too high to be used. A flower shop and newspaper stand occupy the Sansome–Market sidewalk corner.

The plaza's sunken area is recessed approximately eight feet below street level. This space is not used to its full potential owing to its poor sense of entry, its location below street level, its uncomfortable cobblestone paving, its lack of primary and secondary seating, and its absence of view to major street activity.



Location of Zellerbach Plaza, San Francisco.

Zellerbach Plaza's partial success may be explained by its sunny position, its restricted yet interesting view to the sitters along the peripheral wall, its attractiveness as a protected and somewhat quiet gathering place, and its pleasant character created by a small fountain sculpture and ample vegetation.

groups are predominantly male and are particularly large on Friday and Saturday nights, when the plaza functions as a meeting place for party goers. The presence of these young people does not seem to be a problem for other users, who come and go from BART or pass by on adjacent sidewalks.

Successful Features

- Sunny location
- Located at busy intersection
- Open space in front of main BART entry
- Central sitting area focused inward

Unsuccessful Features

- Poorly appointed bus-waiting areas
- Seating not designed for groups
- Insufficient number of trash cans and bicycle racks
- Planters with more trash than greenery
- Poor maintenance
- Some conflicts between elderly and homeless users

7. *Justin Herman Plaza: Grand Public Place—the City Plaza*[7]

Location and Context

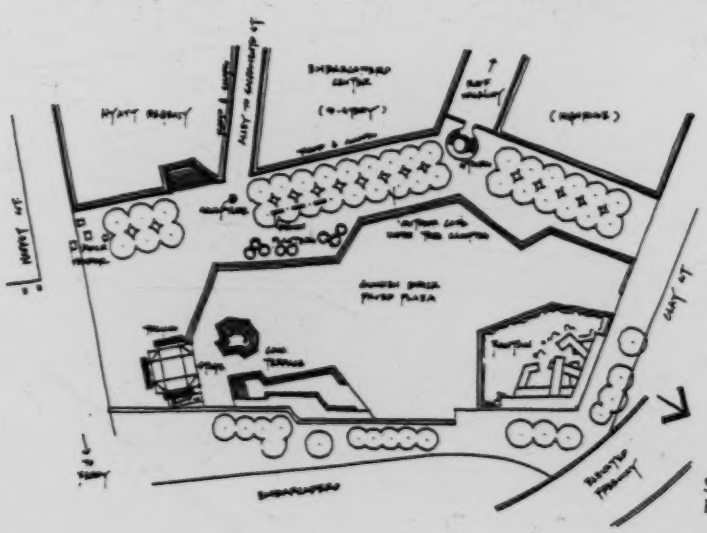
Justin Herman Plaza was built in the early 1970s as part of a massive program to revive San Francisco's deteriorating Embarcadero district. Located at the terminus of Market Street and the edge of the financial district, it is bordered by high-rise office buildings, the Hyatt Regency Hotel, the Golden Gateway residential complex, and the historic Ferry Building. Restaurants, cafés, and retail shops are located at the plaza level of the bordering buildings. Terminals for the ferry, the rapid transit system, and trolley and bus lines, all located in the vicinity, ensure an even flow of passersby.

Description

Urban and large scale, the Justin Herman Plaza has as its focus the angular Vaillancourt Fountain located at one end of a large, slightly sunken, hard-surfaced open space. This area is depressed twelve to eighteen inches and is paved with bricks patterned to radiate toward the fountain sculpture. A seating podium and a covered stage in this open space make it a good location for large-scale staged events. An area for tables and chairs associated with the nearby restaurants and cafés forms the plaza's western edge. A tiled corridor between the Hyatt Regency and a high-rise office building, lined with small shops and take-out cafés, provides access to the financial district. Amidst the pedestrian circulation is a colorful bazaar of street vendors who have been displaced from the sidewalks of downtown San Francisco. Although currently fewer in number than in the 1970s, approximately ten to twelve vendors still find a market here for their wares.

The large brick-paved open space of the plaza has an unstructured pedestrian circulation that flows in all directions and provides a show for those seated on the steps and concrete seating walls that surround its periphery.

[7] Compiled from reports written by students Katherine Ashley (1976), Rene Bradshaw (1977), Thomas Franklin (1976), Katherine Gaunt (1980), Michael Marangio (1982), Jim McClane (1976), and David Peugh (1976).



Site plan of Justin Herman Plaza, San Francisco.

Major Uses and Users

On weekdays, the plaza is used during the lunch period mainly by white-collar office workers from the surrounding office buildings. Approximately three hundred to four hundred people use the plaza during this time, and most are young white adults, with a slight majority being male. Brown baggers and take-out food customers line the outer edges of the plaza and the fountain. Restaurant patrons enjoy their lunch at outdoor tables. The large scale of the plaza is somewhat intimidating and encourages use principally on its outer edges, except when a concert or special event is held. The newly built high rises to the west now block out much of the afternoon sun. People can be observed following the sun patterns, a feature that in itself seems to dictate an upper limit on the number of users in a day.

Groups of children on a field trip can occasionally be seen at the plaza, and teenagers have found a stage here for their skateboarding. On a typical weekday, five to ten of these acrobats may be seen on top of and around the raised platforms, putting on a show for interested onlookers. On weekends their numbers are considerably larger; management is remarkably tolerant and has not—as in some plazas—attempted to evict them. Large concerts on summer weekends serve to introduce people from the larger Bay Area community to this plaza. On weekends throughout the year, the main users are tourists and street vendors.

Overall, Justin Herman Plaza is successful because its grand expanse and location invite attention and large groups of people. It is the preeminent site for large political rallies and the start of parades up Market Street. It is in effect San Francisco's town square, attracting a greater range of users (workers, tourists, performers, vendors, shoppers) and from a greater distance than any other downtown plaza. Such a space in any city should be considered as pivotal to the downtown's open-space system.

Successful Features

- Visible and accessible from many directions
- Accessible to a variety of users
- Take-out food and outdoor tables available
- Variety of formal and informal seating around plaza edge
- Eye-catching participatory fountain
- Large central open area that accommodates crowds at rallies or audiences at concerts
- Stage for noon-hour and weekend concerts
- Space for vendors and plenty of customers
- Informal use by weekend skateboarders tolerated by management

Unsuccessful Features

- When few people are present, space feels somewhat intimidating
- In drought years, fountain not running and perceived as "ugly" by many users
- Afternoon sun blocked by high-rise buildings to west

Warm spring day at Justin Herman Plaza: eating bag lunches and watching people from the ledge around the fountain. (Photo: Jennifer Webber)

8. *Union Square: Grand Public Place—the City Square*[*]

Location and Context

Union Square is located in the shopping district and on the fringe of the financial district of downtown San Francisco. Public transportation is available on all four streets that surround the square and link the area with the financial district, Chinatown, Japan Center, and residential areas near Golden Gate Park. Nearby are tourist interest spots centered on the cable cars, elegant hotels, and commercial stores. A wide spectrum of restaurants, bars, and low-income residential hotels are just a few blocks away.

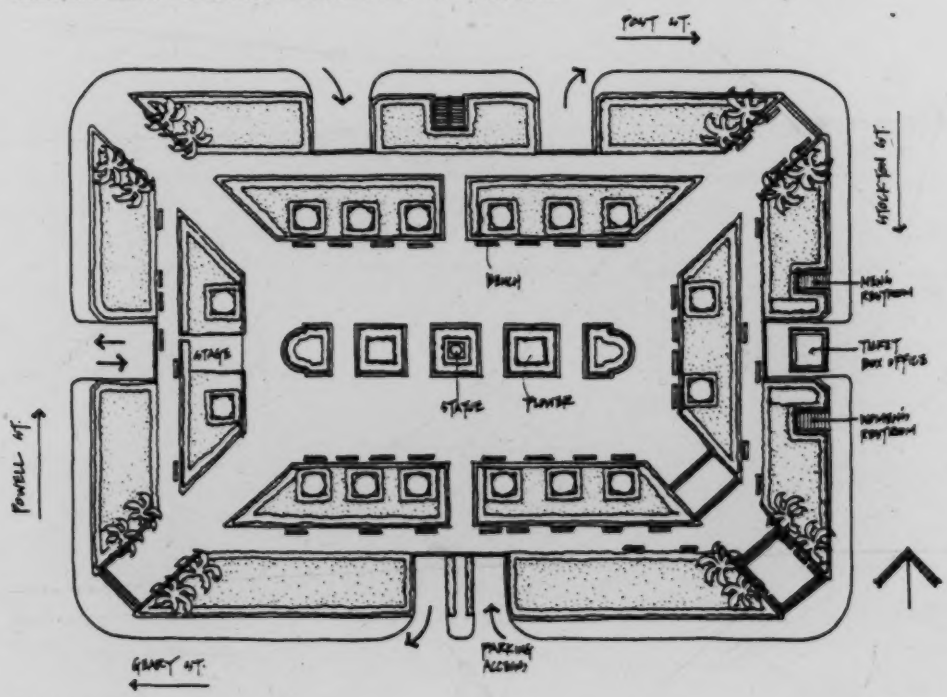
Description

Union Square is sited on a south-facing slope. It is rectangular and occupies a full city block, with streets on each side. Entrances are at each corner at the street intersections. The design is formal and symmetrical, consisting of an outer belt of lawn surrounded by box hedges, an outer peripheral walkway, and an inner belt of grass that surrounds the central plaza. The central plaza is ringed with benches, and along its central axis are planters with a tall monument at the center. The formality of the plaza is reinforced by sixteen symmetrically placed trees and an equal number of lamp posts. At the west end of the plaza is a stage flanked by two flag poles.

Major Uses and Users

The square's diversity of use and users reflects the diversity of the surrounding area. The users are a mixture of occasional visitors and committed regulars. The occasional visitors include tourists and shoppers who stop by, usually briefly, for a photo or a snack, business people on their lunch hour during the week, spectators and participants in planned public events, and others on a weekend outing. The committed regulars are the nearby inhabitants—mostly elderly and male—from residential hotels for whom the square is the only public open space where they can enjoy the outdoors and socialize. Other frequent users are young people, usually single men hanging out and, increasingly, the homeless.

[*] Compiled from reports written by students James Austen (1977), Sally Chafe (1975), Teri Flynn (1975), Laura Hartman (1975), Thomas Johnson (1975), Peter Koenig (1979), and Linda Yen (1977).



Site plan of Union Square, San Francisco.

Union Square is "home" to many lonely older people who live in small rooms in downtown hotels.

The varied activities occurring in the square reflect the differences in the users' ages and in the various subspaces. The elderly use the area as a place to sit and talk and be part of the busy city life. Through their regular and continued presence they claim various territories, one group preferring an entry where the benches are pulled closer together and other groups preferring to sit each day with those who speak their native language. Middle-aged users are largely shoppers and office employees who came here to eat, read, and to watch the action at midday. Many use the diagonals to shortcut through the square and use it only as a pleasant walking route. The lawn areas semienclosed by clipped hedges were originally designed just to look at, but now they have become places to lie down on hot afternoons, to take drugs, and to drink.

One of the most popular lawn areas—packed to capacity on warm days during the lunch hour—is a space that slopes at an angle up from Geary Street, giving the people sitting there an unobstructed view of the street activity while at the same time maintaining a degree of privacy. People also fill up all the available sitting spaces in the central plaza area and the quieter spots along the peripheral pathways.

Union Square was designed as a large public open space that can accommodate various activities, from a large public event to a nap on a park bench, as well as many different users. Although the design's formality restricts more varied seating and the lawns were not intended to be used, the various subspaces created by the level changes, the corner entries, the hedged areas, and the circulation pathways are successful in that they satisfy the requirements of this dense inner-city neighborhood's contextual diversity.

Although this category of downtown open space may seem obsolete, it is significant because it often marks the symbolic heart of a city and its historic focus and can accommodate a great range of users. This kind of space is as tolerant of diversity as the privatized corporate plaza is not, hence its importance in the downtown open-space system and the care that must be taken if such a space is redesigned, so that legitimate uses and users are not excluded.

Successful Features

- Visible and accessible to a wide variety of users
- Accommodates a wide range of users from the homeless to stylish downtown shoppers and tourists
- Sunlit for much of day
- Plenty of seating, both formal (benches) and informal (ledges, steps, lawns)
- Variety of green and hard-surfaced subspaces
- Symmetrical design with central monument and use for civic celebratory events
- Central rectangular plaza area to accommodate rallies and public gatherings
- Diagonal pathways for walking through square as shortcut
- Great range of seating areas for small groups of regulars on a semipermanent basis
- Small lawn areas functioning as semiprivate "outdoor rooms"
- Whole square functioning as "living room" for elderly men who live a short walk away in low-cost hotels

Unsuccessful Features

- Need to cross busy streets to reach square

- Some people inhibited from walking through square when having to pass between long rows of seated regulars
- No seating designed for groups to sit together
- Frequent predominance of male users inhibiting some women from using square

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